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THE SECRET OF DEMOCRACY

Suzanne Labin

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1

Every man bears within himself a dormant fascist

The seals were darting about, wheezing, in the abysmal darkness. One day some of them, more restless than their companions, went off to investigate the distant seas and discovered some wonderful seaweed that lit up everything with its phosphorescence. They brought it back to their tribe, where it was received with gurgles of admiration. But soon the supporters of the old customs began to grumble: "Our ancestors managed to stay healthy and strong in the dark waters for thousands of years without needing your grass; let's get rid of this pale gleam that is making our young men soft and our girls coquettes." It was the tribal leaders, above all, who hated the light, for one could now see that the depths of the sea, on the fear of which their power depended, were not so mysterious as they claimed. They therefore vented their spleen so thoroughly on the fascinating novelty that the seals finally came to believe this pale gleam would be their ruination, and one day, in a fit of anger, they buried the seaweed under thirty feet of slime.

But a hundred years later, baby seals were being born with a pale gleam in their eyes.

Democracy, a flame constantly flickering but incessantly renewed, hallowed by reason but profaned by life, has been fighting an uneven battle for two thousand years against ancestral absolutism—a battle that nevertheless it occasionally wins.

Totalitarianism did not fall to earth from interplanetary space like a meteor on a dark morning. It sprang from existing societies, it took as the elements of its program everything that was already cruel, greedy, and reactionary in those societies. It is a grave error to think that these societies en bloc represented democracy as opposed to totalitarianism. No, democracy is not a hereditary virtue of any particular people; only the unremitting struggle of enlightened men keeps it alive, throbbing weakly, always at death's door. Let their vigilance relax for a moment, and the lava of despotism overflows everything.

Every man bears within himself a dormant fascist, so that it is easy for totalitarians to turn nations against enlightenment. Yet totalitarian victories, however brutal, so far have never been able to keep the light, or at least its pale shimmer, from reappearing in the eyes of each generation. Sometimes, through a combination of happy circumstances, the shimmer has managed to last for a few consecutive decades, and men have even thought it a part of the normal course of things. "The right to think freely and to act independently," wrote John Morley in 1870, "is now a principle that has been definitely adopted, with minor exceptions, by all schools of thought that have any chance of influencing the future."

Alas, Morley did not foresee a relapse into barbarism. An upheaval occurs, and the margin of security behind which a free existence can develop disappears. Then we realize that the survival of the pale shimmer is a perpetual

miracle, the miracle of intelligence subduing force, of David vanquishing Goliath.

The war we recently survived was officially won by democracy, and yet a dictatorship as dark as any that preceded it continues to oppress a quarter of the globe. Who would say, to see the cause of liberty tottering, that it had just won a victory? Fascism has been downed, but Buchenwalds, from the Oder to the Pacific, survive and multiply; and from the same Gehennas rise the same groans. Peace has returned, but it is sickly, precarious, continually marred by the flames of war. Democracy has been restored, but in its ranks the murderers of liberty plot again. Harassed by forces he cannot overcome, the individual takes refuge, each in his own elusive hiding place: in dark shells of superstition, in shells of neutrality, in painted shells of Utopias. And in the public square thus left vacant, the big drum of the totalitarian mountebank is installed again. Everything branded disgraceful and thought to be finished with by enlightened man—police atrocities, autos-da-fé, slavery; everything that tyranny implies—that is degrading to the individual and fatal to civilization—flourishes more vigorously than ever only some few hours away by air, in the very land where, just thirty years ago, a revolution pretended to free humanity. We have failed to draw any profound lesson from the horror of the concentration camp; democracy pursues its erratic course over the humus, still intact and perhaps even richer, of enslaving passions. The whole arsenal of fascist charges—according to which democracy is the begetter of weakness, stagnation, disorder, and corruption—is reactivated, refurbished, and put back into circulation by the combined forces of old reaction and young communism. The miraculous flame again threatens to die.

The present book takes up these constantly reiterated

charges one by one. By establishing their stupidity, by revealing the hidden motives of those who hurl them, it tries to bridge the gulf that, even among democrats, still separates the approval the intellect accords democracy from the confidence the emotions deny it.

Each man bears within himself a dormant fascist: a tendency to be authoritarian and fanatical. That is why public opinion, even in a democracy, is torn (to adopt the familiar terminology of psychoanalysis) between a superego that preaches liberty and an ego that whispers intolerance. And this conflict finally plunges man into a deep-seated neurosis.

In order to get out of this, man must patiently unravel the web of intrigue plotted by the unconscious, which is totalitarian, against his conscious, which is civilized. The purely theoretical—and therefore precarious—respect that democracy enjoys must be changed into an instinctive —and therefore irresistible—devotion. The pale shimmer must be transformed into a warm light.

CAN DEMOCRACY BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF ITS FREEDOMS?

Since the purpose of this book is to clarify, it is proper to begin with definitions.

Etymologically, democracy means "the power of the people." However, in modern usage the emphasis is on the nature of power rather than on its source, for a government that guarantees freedom of expression, even if it has a prince at its head, is more readily termed democratic than a government that prohibits such freedom, even though such a government seems to derive its authority from the masses.

The functional definition of democracy, as it is gener-

ally understood today, may be formulated as follows: a political regime in which all classes of the population, without exception of race, color, or creed, enjoy at all times not only guarantees of personal security but a series of civil rights—the most important of which are association, assembly, expression, and information—so that the population can, with the greatest independence, take a maximum part in all important forms of political activity, while the actual government is carried on by genuine representatives and is subject, in the last resort, to the consent of the governed.

The first criticism of this definition is that it contains a great many vague terms. What, exactly, is "independence"? Assuming that the press could become objective, are not individuals molded by their schooling and by customs? What, precisely, do we mean by "genuine representatives"? So many and so subtle are the ways of usurping delegated political powers that the adjective "genuine" cannot rule out the vast tribe of political mountebanks.

The objection is pertinent, but it shows only that in order to give a more exact definition of democracy (as of any other human institution) we must complete the enunciation of the principle with a series of specifications as to the ways and means that permit its realization and that, properly speaking, embody it. In other words, an exhaustive definition of democracy can only be a treatise on democracy. Although the present work makes no such pretensions, it does attempt to dissipate the ambiguities of the preceding definition.

For the last century a more disturbing criticism of this definition has been favored by the Marxists. Defining democracy in terms of civil rights, they assert, is a trick to cover up bourgeois interests; it is obvious that political contests favor the economically privileged, even if they are

apparently governed by fair rules, so that under a regime of social inequality freedom is advantageous only to the rich and is a hollow word to the poor.

But experience has shown that even if this criticism has some foundation in fact, it is nonetheless true that the poorer groups may also make good use of civil rights, as evidenced by the many material gains they have won, thanks to the right to assemble, to express themselves, and to strike. Experience has also shown that each time the workers see themselves deprived of those freedoms the Marxists dismiss so lightly, they find themselves more harshly exploited than before, for it is in great part to obtain cheap labor that modern dictatorships are set up.

The Social Democrats in Europe understand the solidarity that links all freedoms and links the well-being of the workers to the freedom of all; unlike the Bolsheviks, they do not despise the liberal form of democracy but devote themselves, rather, to perfecting it. "If poverty renders your freedom anemic," they say to the worker, "come to us to eliminate the one and increase the other." Communism, on the contrary, whispers to him: "Since your freedom is a lie, despise it." And it adds, taking cover under the ideal it is trying to destroy: "In so doing, you are not transgressing the democratic spirit, for this spirit commands you to protect not the idle words of the first schemer who comes along but the interests of the workers." And communism reminds him that etymologically democracy means "the power of the people" and not "a collection of freedoms"; and it expatiates on the word "people," the very resonance of which is propitious to demagogy, rather than on the word "power," which runs the risk of arousing embarrassing demands. It contrasts the picture of horny-handed proletarians running a cooperative with that of a smart coterie overthrowing

cabinets. And when this contrast has tickled the conceit of the masses, it launches its new formula: popular democracy.

THE PEOPLE'S POWER AND ITS FREEDOMS ARE ONE

The impudent use of this expression to make outright tyranny palatable occurs in one of the most appalling attempts of all time at political perversion: that of dissociating the idea of democracy, which the unavowed totalitarians wish to use as cover, from the idea of freedom, which they dream of abolishing. But we can prove that the original meaning of democracy—the power of the people—fails in any respect to justify the turn toward dictatorship that we are asked to take.

In order to prove this, we need only observe that the word "power," rightly understood, must comprise many forms of political influence besides that manifested in the choice of government officials. A people allowed only to elect representatives and deprived of the other civil rights —to organize trade unions or political parties, to strike, to write, to speak, or to travel at will—would enjoy so limited an influence that it could not be said to possess power. Moreover, the people must be able at any time to bend this power in any direction it wishes, and to that end today's minority must have complete latitude to become, if it can, tomorrow's majority; the indispensable freedom of opposition must be guaranteed.

On the other hand, if we wish to be equally rigorous in our interpretation of the word "people," it is clear that it must mean *all* the people, without any restriction of race, class, religion, or opinion. Finally, we must respect one condition that, were the public mind not perverted by dictatorship, would be so obvious we should be able to pass

it over in silence: that the individuals who constitute this sovereign people be able to enjoy their intellectual and physical faculties permanently. This precludes an abusive propaganda which would hypnotize their minds, or an all-powerful police which would abuse their bodies. Thus, by taking the words in their full and complete meaning, we derive from the definition "power of the people" most of the public freedoms usually considered characteristic of democracy; and we see that there is no foundation for the communist claim that the one contradicts the other. The people's power and freedoms are one.

Let us illustrate this analysis by an example from the political realities of our own period. In France, before 1945, women did not have the right to vote. Enough! the Communists will say; according to one of the implications of your own definition, France was not democratic. Not so! Those women who did not go to the ballot box were quite at liberty to speak at meetings, to read any book they wished, to defend any idea at all; they could go to Mass or stay away, applaud the head of the state or boo him, join a party or leave it, change their place of employment, travel, marry a foreigner—none of which the women voters of the "people's democracies" is permitted to do. Similarly, in Hitler's Germany, women were also permitted to vote, but they had no other right except to look after the three K's: *Kirche, Kinder, Küche* (church, children, cooking). The mere act of dropping a ballot into a box does not mean the people really enjoy power: a woman without the right to vote, but who can speak her mind freely, enjoys a greater degree of democracy than a woman who votes but who must be silent.

We can make an analogous observation about the Negroes in the United States. No one will deny that they are still victims of race prejudice. Nevertheless, the means

available to them for influencing public life greatly exceed those at the disposal of the white citizens of the "people's democracies." Negro laborers in the United States do not sit down yet at all meetings beside white laborers, but they can shout "Down with Eisenhower" with impunity; whereas Czech workers, without any race prejudice, languish in the same concentration camps as Buryat workers for not having chanted loudly enough: "Long live the Soviet Union." In the England of bewigged judges, the prime minister kisses the queen's hand, but if he took the notion to meddle with the prerogatives of the labor unions, a chorus of protests from the most humble workers would cost him his job; whereas in the "people's democracies," where the red flag flies over all factories, working hours are doubled, workers are deported, and union leaders are shot without a single worker daring to raise his voice.

Even the ownership of property by the people is a source of power and hence of democracy. I mean the actual ownership of material things, not the abstract property specified in demagogic constitutions. The following anecdote illustrates this important distinction. An American mechanic in a delegation visiting an automobile factory in the U.S.S.R. asks a Stakhanovite: "Who does this big factory belong to?" "To me," answers the Russian with pride. "To you!" exclaims the American in astonishment. "Yes, to me, to my helper, to the watchman, to the people, or what have you!" "Oh," says the American, "and these cars in front of the gate—do they belong to you, too, to your helper, to the watchman?" "Oh, no," says the Soviet workman, "they belong to the factory superintendent, to the secretary of the party, to the M.V.D. officer." The next year the Stakhanovite, in turn a visiting delegate to the United States, encounters our mechanic at the Ford fac-

tory. He asks him: "Who does this huge factory belong to?" "To Henry Ford," replies the mechanic. "What!" retorts the indignant Russian, "a factory as enormous as this is the property of one man! And all these cars in front of the gate—probably they belong to Mr. Ford, too?" "Oh, no," replies the American, "the green one's mine, the black job belongs to my helper, and the red one to the watchman."

From this anecdote we may draw a lesson that the Communists, because of the materialistic doctrine they profess, should be the first to understand: it is that well-being and sovereignty are closely linked; and to the extent that the citizens of the people's democracies enjoy less food to strengthen their bodies, fewer cars to get about in, less living space for their privacy, fewer books to improve their minds than do the people of the bourgeois democracies, they have less power and therefore less democracy.

THE TEST OF DEMOCRACY

Your definition, you will say, assumes a great number of conditions that every existing government violates at times. How often must our freedoms be violated before we pass from democracy to dictatorship? In order to grant governments the certificate of democracy they all demand, must we engage in the endless quibbling that may arise as to the meaning and scope—not to mention the intent—of all political actions? Can we not avoid this by means of a criterion that is at once clear, simple, and concise and that would allow us to differentiate at a glance between totalitarian and democratic regimes, as in chemistry litmus paper is used to distinguish an acid from an alkali, without having to go back to scientific definitions?

We do possess such a criterion, which is: To have a

democracy, it is both necessary and sufficient that free opposition to the government exist. Let us first prove that this condition is necessary and sufficient, and we shall then see that it is simple and clear in its application.

In general, Communists refuse to admit democracy implies opposition—for they like to pretend that in a supposedly classless society criticism does not exist, not because the government has stifled it but because nobody has thought of any objections. They attempt to explain by this kind of natural harmony the miracle of the permanent absence of any visible opposition in the U.S.S.R., where the perfect democracy supposedly holds sway. But common sense refutes this fairy tale. In a country of hundreds of millions of people, and in view of the complexity of social problems, the likelihood of all citizens constantly agreeing on all aspects of all political projects is so infinitesimal, regardless of the economic status of the society, that we may consider differences of opinion—even serious differences of opinion—as inevitable as the irregularity of the seacoast. In any country, if no complaint is ever heard against the policy of the government, we may be sure we are confronted with the hand of the police and not with the manifestations of unanimity. If essential freedoms are assured to all, opposition is inevitable.

We can test our criterion by observing one fact: it is easier for a government to simulate respect for majority rule than to fake freedom of opposition. In fact, many means—propaganda, corruption, electoral frauds—permit the rights of the majority to be usurped in reality while the illusion still remains that power springs from the people. But it is impossible to pretend there is an active and critical opposition when in actuality the opposition is gagged or liquidated. Nothing is more apparent than the existence of an opposition, for as soon as it is free, it cries

out as loudly as possible against the government. Thus the use of this criterion is sufficient to unmask those who proclaim themselves democrats while they fill their concentration camps. The most radical way to test them is to cut short their rationalizations and ask: "What newsstands in your city carry the opposition newspapers?"

No opposition papers, no democracy.

TOTALITARIANISM: THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF ALL ANTIDEMOCRATIC CURRENTS

After presenting the accused whose defense we are undertaking—that is, democracy—it is only proper to make the acquaintance of its accusers.

They form a motley assemblage of political forces and instinctive tendencies. As organized parties, fascism and Nazism are dead, but their spirit survives, tenacious and multiform. The true democrats have won a provisional victory of arms, but not of opinion or of argument. No illuminating philosophy has been capable of uprooting the idea that the less it is discussed, the more the authority of a leader strengthens a nation, whereas party debate weakens the social structure in proportion to its vigor. This thesis is simply the expression, on the political plane, of man's instinctive fondness for constraint, and it is this meshing of totalitarian formulas with ancestral emotional responses that gives totalitarianism a formidable advantage over the humanistic and rationalistic ambitions of democracy.

By what name can we designate the whole family of antidemocratic currents? Fifty years ago the answer would have been clear: the camp of democracy would have been called "the left," and that of its enemies, "the right." Today this way of affixing labels would merely help to spread

the cankerous confusion on which the Communists are living and which is partly attributable to the inertia of the public mind. Vocabulary always lags behind reality, above all when traumatic shocks have congealed our picture of political categories. Thus it is only a fraction of "the right" that opposes democracy, for another fraction joined it at the sight of the Nazi atrocities. On the other hand, a large segment of "the left" has gone to swell the already numerous ranks of the enemies of the "power of the people." Today, even though it is the followers of Marxism who are putting workers in concentration camps and the bourgeois who are trying to get them out, this phenomenon makes few people reconsider the labels they gave, once and for all, of "left" and "right," of democrat and antidemocrat. The Communists who gag the press are still considered members of the democratic left. The bourgeois who permit Communist papers to appear are still denounced as pillars of the antidemocratic right.

This freezing of the vocabulary presents us with a first difficulty. Although in practice communism, Nazism, and fascism today embody closely related forms of thought and action, their champions have been so violently opposed in the past that public opinion is not yet prepared to apply indiscriminately one or the other of these labels to the great family of destroyers of liberty. What is more, antidemocracy—at least the instinctive kind—finds an echo in some of those very persons who behave in public according to democratic standards. How many scrupulous voters catch themselves castigating the parliamentary system, how many preach freedom of thought and are annoyed by the slightest opposition, how many celebrate Bastille Day but dream only of bastilles for their opponents, how many declaim in favor of liberty but acclaim a Caesar in their hearts?

Thus our opponent is not merely an organized political movement but also a state of mind and a complex of inclinations that more or less consciously favors military over civil life, adherence to dogma by intellectuals, and an authoritarian structure for the political system. Since no current word quite embodies this meaning, we shall content ourselves with the already accepted word "totalitarianism" for the disparate ensemble of antidemocratic forces, with the proviso that it be extended to include the psychological and ideological realms as well. In order to clarify the manner in which this word is used in the present book, the following definition is offered: A body of ideas or of psychic and political inclinations that subordinates the citizen to the total, disciplined service of a harsh, collective cause (country, race, class, party) held to be superior to individual aspirations; that represses as pernicious all differences of opinion; that proscribes those liberties which permit differences to be expressed; and that considers a government not as the representative of its constituents but the secular arm of a transcendent order which is therefore monolithic and dictatorial. The present study is a defense of democracy against totalitarianism.

THE PRESTIGE OF DISPARAGEMENT

Before proceeding to the heart of this defense, I must alert the reader against certain bad habits of a large part of the public that completely misrepresents the debate between democracy and dictatorship.

The public is consistently more critical of democratic governments than of totalitarian leaders, and the habit of being severe toward the person who leaves one free to judge him, and indulgent toward the one who forbids it, is so deeply rooted that the public no longer realizes its

partiality. It is all too evident that democracy is more exposed to attack than dictatorship, for it shares, with all works of reason, the noble but perilous privilege of nourishing criticism along with progress. In totalitarian enterprises, on the contrary, servitude, far from militating against idolatry, promotes it. This is perfectly natural; one can no more censure the vices of a despot if he reigns by divine right than one can criticize the fall of heavy bodies due to the law of gravity. It is precisely to make criticism impossible that the totalitarians present the power of their leader as a force of nature, from which derive the numerous and revealing comparisons in their literature between the leader and lightning, the mountaintop, the sun, the eagle, and volcanic lava. But once a government renounces the easy way of unquestioning faith, it at once opens the dikes to bad faith. In inviting its peoples to free discussion, democracy runs the risk of seeing them go to extremes, for while free discussion is heightened by criticism, criticism may deteriorate into defamation.

The path proceeding from reflection to criticism is profitable, but the danger begins on the slope which may lead from criticism to slander. How tempting is the vicious sequel to a step that was initially sound! Judging for oneself demands an effort of the mind that many men seek to avoid by impassioned attacks—the best occasions being those in which they have just discovered a fault in the behavior of their opponents. It is, then, at the very moment when they should be summoning the strictest objectivity that they lose their tempers; it is when they should calmly seek the *causes* that they excitedly denounce the *persons.* They magnify errors into crimes, men of faulty judgment into monsters, and vituperatively hurl at the accused the dissatisfaction with themselves that has long been gnawing at their hearts. Those with dirty hands rage against the

corrupt, schemers loudly denounce rebels, opportunists wax indignant against demagogues.

And there is this diabolical element in imprecation: while it obscures intelligence and drags decency through the mud, the person who indulges in it feels the flattering sensation of having suddenly become shrewd and upright. Actually he has become bold because, ignoring all scruples, he has joined the pack of totalitarians. From that moment on, safely surrounded, he is no longer afraid to shout against the good-natured official who democratically allowed him access to the soapbox in the public square.

As for the totalitarian official, he takes good care to avoid this sort of generosity, which often turns against the giver. He stops these dangerous chain reactions at the source by knocking over the soapboxes and erecting gallows in their place. From that moment, everyone, knowing he can no longer safely denounce anything, refrains from criticizing, and, knowing he can no longer criticize, refrains from thinking. This explains how dictatorship, whatever its crimes, remains innocent in the eyes of the masses.

One important factor that strengthens the attractiveness of defaming democracy and that is fostered by the very way in which democracy functions is that it is essentially self-critical. Democracy was born of a rebellion against the powerful, and it considers this origin a title to fame. If it has already won many freedoms, it is still far from having fulfilled all the hopes of its fathers, so that to complain within the bosom of democracy is warranted, permissible, and creditable. When criticism is both easy and commendable, it is not surprising that it is good form to shout that everything that is wrong is the fault of the government. Democracy invites its citizens to feel the more faithful to its origins the more they fling abuse at its institutions. It

secretes progress from one breast and discontent from the other.

Dictatorship, on the other hand, secretes slavery from one udder and complacency from the other. If the democrats make it a point of honor to allow their detractors complete freedom, the totalitarians feel no shame in hounding free thought until they have limited society to a sort of closed and magic tribe. In dictatorships, the fear of taboos leads to the deification of the guardians of those taboos, just as in democracies the criticism of institutions leads to the defamation of the guardians of those institutions. We are familiar with the ancestral bond that exists between the fear of mysterious powers and the cult of visible personifications of power, and we know that the least humiliating way of enduring forced obedience is to transform it into frenzied admiration.

It is this set purpose—to criticize democracies and to worship dictatorships—that has warped the comparison of the two systems in so many minds and has resulted in confusing the very basis of judgment. Whereas in dictatorships public opinion exalts the accomplishments and ignores the mistakes, in democracies it passes over the the accomplishments and flaunts the mistakes. In the Soviet Union, a hydroelectric plant—even if built with American machinery—proves the regime's superiority, but a famine resulting from that regime's policies is ascribed to drought; in France nobody ascribes to the President credit for the Genissiat Dam, but everyone considers the rise in prices evidence of the inefficiency of the government. In Germany the Strength-through-Joy camps showed Hitler's solicitude for his people; in France the Ministry of Recreation was proof of the extravagant demagoguery of Léon Blum. In Italy trains ran on time because of the genius of Mussolini, and when they ran late, it was be-

cause of vile saboteurs; in a democracy trains run late because of cabinet ministers, and on time because of the virtues of the race.

In a certain sense, this apathy toward the accomplishments of democratic government and hypersensitiveness to its failures is evidence of the vigor of the democratic regime. With a country, as with a man, it is a proof of good health not to be aware of one's body, to forget it if one is well and to complain only when one is sick. In doing just the opposite, in concealing the infection in nearly all its cells in order to glorify the performance of a single one, dictatorship reveals its profound morbidity. But this fact is seldom understood by the people. That is why democracy's tolerance engenders a tendency toward criticism, from which it suffers; whereas the intolerance of dictatorship arouses a tendency toward flattery, from which it gains advantage.

FALSE WINDOWS FOR SYMMETRY

For some years this systematic partiality in favor of dictatorship has been manifested under the guise of impartiality, which is achieved simply by handing out to the two opposing camps equal amounts of praise and blame.

It is indeed possible that impartiality will lead us to discover in opposing arguments almost equal proportions of error and of truth, but it is also possible that this same impartiality will disclose more faults on one side than on the other. One cannot prove one's judgment impartial by the mere balance of pro and con, as the obdurate "neutralists" would have us believe. To recognize facts is not to be partial. In 1939, would it have been partiality to prefer Roosevelt to Hitler? Then why should we be considered

partial in 1955 when we declare Eisenhower preferable to Kruschev?

It is not really because they are innocently mistaken about the rules of objectivity that so many commentators today are playing the part of little Solomons as between Russia and the United States. Some do so because they are afraid of reprisals if Russia should be victorious. Others are obeying a sort of mental censor they inflict upon themselves: they are the men of the Socialist "left" who, having taken vows of subversion, have established within themselves a moral policeman whose task it is to reject, without examination, any suggestion of compromise with the existing order—even a temporary alliance against an especially urgent danger.

Such a suggestion becomes irresistible if the facts show that American capitalism, in its modern democratic form, represents a very appreciable degree of civilization in comparison with Soviet barbarism. "Shall I, then," says the man of the left who thinks he embodies a still superior degree of civilization, "under the pretext of fighting against Soviet barbarism, be obliged to find myself on the same side of the fence with the old capitalist enemy?" "Horrors!" cries his inner policeman, "Such scandal cannot be tolerated!" "I must so see the facts," says the man of the left to himself, "as to prevent myself from reaching this conclusion. I might see as much evil on one side as on the other. Let's have a closer look. From the East, alas, it cannot be denied, the sinister glow of a hundred Karatangas hurts my eyes. But in the West, O my policeman, can you see nothing equally terrible to save my symmetry? Scan the horizon well, O my guardian, for my soul is in great danger of escaping from you."

"I've got it," replies the vigilant guardian. "Look over there, way off in Virginia, at that mob howling around

a bonfire. Five hundred of them have ganged up to bind one man and hang him from the branch of a tree above the flames. Why? Simply because his skin is black while his persecutors' is white. Isn't this just as abominable as the prisons of Karatanga?"

Now, tens of thousands of innocent victims die every year in these concentration camps as a result of indescribable physical and moral suffering, whereas there have been two Negroes lynched in the United States in the last five years. Oppression, exploitation, and obscurantism are steadily increasing in the U.S.S.R., whereas discriminatory measures are constantly being abolished in the United States. The most badly treated Negroes in the most backward of the Southern states are kings, from the standpoint of dignity, compared with even the Stakhanovite workers in the most progressive of Soviet factories. If given the choice, scarcely one of the supposedly sovereign workers of the U.S.S.R. would hesitate to exchange his lot for that of a victim of American race prejudice. The oppression of everyone in the U.S.S.R. is so much more cruel and debasing than the persecution of the Negroes in the United States, and it affects so many more victims, that merely from the quantitative point of view any attempt to establish an equivalence between the two evils is misleading, if not cynical.

The attempt to compare them from the ethical standpoint is no less unjustified. In the United States racial discrimination is condemned by all enlightened people, disavowed by the immense majority of newspapers, opposed by official bodies. In the U.S.S.R., on the contrary, manhunts, tortures, autos-da-fé, the death penalty for children, and witchcraft trials are preached in the press, celebrated by poets, hallowed by the Academy, and imposed by the state; these are not lamented survivals of

age-old customs but deliberate creations of the government. In one case, such action is the sporadic outburst of a racial primitivism latent in all peoples—in Northern Africa, in Palestine . . . and in the U.S.S.R.—as well as in the United States. In the case of the U.S.S.R., it is an official, systematic, and planned bestiality so greatly exceeding that which stirs within the worst individuals that the government has to mobilize all its means of propaganda to impose respect for it upon the consciences of its citizens. In the case of the United States, it is anonymous outbreaks in which only the lowest members of society secretly indulge; in the U.S.S.R., it is an immense river of blood spilled in broad daylight by the supermen of society.

How much would we give to see just one of the ten thousand Soviet dailies publish some morning a single line expressing one one-hundredth as much criticism of the Soviet prison camps as the American dailies display against racial discrimination! If measured only by the volume of protests to which they give rise in their own countries, the two phenomena, far from being equal, are in the ratio of a positive quantity to zero, which, as everyone knows, is infinity.

Of course those distributing balanced bad marks compensate for this infinite inequality by making infinitely more ado about two Negroes lynched in the United States than about ten million workers murdered in the U.S.S.R. As against one American plutocrat who subjects a "respectful prostitute" to moral blackmail so she will agree to accuse a poor Negro of a crime he did not commit, there exist in Moscow hundreds who subject thousands of revolutionists and ordinary citizens to torture so that they will accuse one another—and themselves to boot—of monstrous crimes they did not commit. Curiously enough, Jean-Paul Sartre, the champion of these "impartial" cen-

sors, has never dramatized this figure of the Soviet autocrat. In reality, these lovers of symmetry feel the gulf that separates the two camps so acutely that they cannot honestly keep up the game. They therefore choose a discreetly veiled attic window toward the East and inspect the East by candlelight, whereas they choose a yawning bay window toward the West through which they peer with their most glaring searchlights.

This determination to keep an equal balance between a dictatorship and a democracy obliges the neutralists to distort not merely the facts they are judging but even the criteria of their judgments, so that they completely change their frame of reference when they pass from the examination of a dictatorship to that of a democracy. In favor of dictatorship they call upon all the refinements of Machiavellianism to invoke some sort of grandiose end that would condone the most abominable violence as a necessary means; but they assume the position of the moral purist toward democracy and judge the slightest departures from the rules of humanity as scandals that no end can justify. When they speak of dictatorships they are forever talking of gestation, of foundation, of statistics; they are "historicists" and deliberately cynical. When they turn to the democracies, they confine themselves to the immediate, to scandals, to special cases; they are present-minded and scrupulously virtuous. On one hand, they soft-pedal actions and play up principles; on the other, they explain that principles are merely "metaphysical levers" and that only actions count. Tyrannies are judged only by their intentions; democracies are held to account for results. Neutralists hesitate for a long time over the matter of whether it is correct to label "fascist" a regime in which not a word may be printed against the leader's will, where no man is permitted to travel without the

leader's consent, where no book may appear without the leader's permission; but they do not hesitate for a moment in crying "dictatorship" if a bourgeois government bans an opposition newspaper for twenty-four hours. On one hand they display the most delicate concern for the accuracy and propriety of terms, whereas on the other they indulge freely in metaphor and bombast.

In a democracy, have prisoners been maltreated, have the police raided and searched a lawyer's files by night, has a labor-union delegation been brushed off by a government official? The neutralists fill whole pages with tion that this protest can be made only in a democracy. "We are the perspicacious, the scrupulous, and the exacting, and the slightest suspicion of vice under seven mattresses is enough to shock our virtue. We are the great protesters, in love with the absolute, and we ignore degrees in evil."

In reality, the two attitudes—vigilance as to detail and acceptance of the whole—are perfectly compatible. One may at the same time wax indignant at a single abuse and yet not be indignant at the whole government, at least until one has ascertained whether the whole government is heated complaints; but they do not tell us what proportion of all prisoners has been maltreated, or how many lawyers' offices have been tampered with in ten years, or how many labor-union delegations have been brushed off in a year. In order to lay the blame on the whole regime for specific cases, they conceal the number and emphasize the gravity.

This is perfidious procedure, a cheap way of giving an appearance of fairness to those who adopt it. "Look," they seem to say as they throw out their chests, "we are the guardian lions of social justice, for we emit a roar at the slightest attack made against it." But they forget to men-

riddled with such abuses. An isolated fact may be enough to serve as the basis for moral reproof, but it assumes social significance only through repetition, and the degree of significance depends first and foremost on the number of repetitions. If it is true that every conviction of an innocent man is a stigma on the regime that allows it, it is not true that the stigma is as profound and the government as reprehensible if such a conviction occurs once in six months rather than a thousand times a day. In this lies the sophism that tends to confound us with the following dilemma: either to denounce immoderately or to absolve shamelessly—on condition that what is denounced is always democracy and what is absolved is always dictatorship.

The progressive mentality is inseparable from a certain coolness of moral and political judgment, and nothing is more foreign to it than the intolerance of the puritan who sees in every deviation of conduct the specter of original sin. Our democracy is not rotten because an official has taken a bribe, any more than a girl is a prostitute because she has had a lover. Besides, our guardian lions of justice brandish a puritanism of curious and contradictory whims. Toward the democratic bourgeoisie, these "progressives" are puritanical on the political level, because they must undermine the government, and emancipated on the moral level, because they must appear *avant-garde*. Toward Soviet dictatorship they are generous on the political level, because they must excuse the leader, and puritanical on the moral level, because the masses must be kept under control.

If they do not hesitate to indulge in such intellectual contortions, it is because an attitude of political puritanism practiced toward democracy—and toward it alone—brings them big dividends. Not only does it furnish an

apparent justification for their false windows, but in addition it maintains among the progressives a permanent bad conscience that inhibits their critical spirit. Since it is true that the flesh is weak, nothing is easier, if the puritanical tendency has been cultivated in a good man, than to convince him, upon his first mistake, of his fall from grace and to make him live steeped in remorse so that he will no longer think he has the right to censure others. It is by giving the liberals such guilt complexes that communism succeeds in its well-known blackmail on political virtue: "You are not qualified to condemn my ten million murders, for you have two Negroes on your conscience. Clean up your own back yard first."

Now, in politics, more than in any other field, evil is relative. Societies, which do not have an infinite capacity for improvement, would condemn themselves to paralysis if they tried to attack all evils, large and small, at the same time and with equal zeal. That is why the first duty of an informed politician is to establish a hierarchy of dangers, and if it happens that the danger at the top of the list stands out in especially dramatic fashion, it is legitimate and reasonable that the zeal devoted to the others should cool.

As long as there was no government in the world whose aim was to reduce the population to the condition of helots, it was legitimate and reasonable to consider violations of freedom and humanity in the bourgeois countries as major vices, to the elimination of which the efforts of all men of good will should be devoted. But when a government extends its atrocities over a third of the globe, and when its impostures and sophisms carry in their wake millions of minds in the other two-thirds, to the point where this degrading of conscience already constitutes a much more serious handicap to social progress than capi-

talist exploitation itself, then it is legitimate and reasonable to treat capitalism as a minor evil. Thus we must refuse to let ourselves be intimidated by the purists' bluff and must say outright: "We recognize the sins of the Western world, we have no sympathy for them, we know that they continue to dirty our hands, and yet we assert that we have the right and the duty to devote ourselves first to destroying the monster whose hands are dripping with blood; after that, we shall be glad to turn to washing our own."

It is high time that the gentlemen of the left who fear that criticism directed first and foremost against the U.S.S.R. will play into the hands of capitalist reaction should realize that criticism directed first and foremost against capitalism plays much more tragically into the hands of Soviet reaction.

2

Is democracy stagnant and totalitarianism dynamic?

YOUNG REGIMES AND OLD REGIMES

The totalitarians regularly criticize democracy as an anemic, stagnant regime. They proudly contrast it with their own, which they claim to be full of life and overflowing with youth. Here again they confuse opinion with the vagueness of their terms, for they are careful not to specify whether they mean "youth" literally or figuratively, or whether their regime is supposed to cultivate the prime of life or the novelty of ideas. They simply leave it to the magic of the word to arouse pleasant pictures of firm flesh, bright glances, and supple muscles, and they offer in contrast the caricature of coteries interested only in drying up vital impulses. Here they have shown, they think, the dynamism of totalitarian regimes and the impotence of democratic regimes.

Instead of becoming elated by the pleasant but ambiguous fragrance of the word "young," let us examine the different fields in which it may be applied intelligently to the life of nations.

VIGOR OF POPULATIONS

Is it a question of the demographic field, and do they claim that totalitarian states are the most propitious for the flowering of youth?

In democracies, where birth and death rates have fallen for a century, it is true that the proportion of young men is smaller than in dictatorships. But statistics also show that the countries in which the percentage of young people is relatively low (France, England, the United States) are those in which the standard of living is the highest, whereas the countries in which it is high (Spain, Russia, China, Japan) are the poorest. And since poverty weakens the people, whereas well-being strengthens it, it follows that these young people, the pride of the dictators, are in fact much less vigorous than the so-called old people of the democratic regimes.

In highly civilized countries such as England and the United States, the life expectancy has advanced from forty years in 1850 to sixty-eight—an increase, during the only century in which the democratic system has functioned almost uninterruptedly, greater than that which humanity had laboriously attained in more than two thousand years. In antiquity, indeed, men lived on the average only twenty years.[1]

This lowering of the mortality rate has been attributed, not without reason, to the progress of medicine and social hygiene, but it is not sufficiently realized that it is only because of democracy that the masses have been able to benefit by it. In India, Japan, Russia, and in the Arab world, where a feudal system kept the population in poverty and serfdom, life continued to be precarious, and the conquests of science were restricted to medical schools, without reaching the people. This remains true today in

totalitarian countries, where reality gives the lie to the fairy tale of despots working to benefit the masses in spite of themselves. As soon as we examine the facts closely, we observe that if these despots have recourse to force, it is in order to impose what the people would never grant freely: overwork, slavery, poverty—all factors that shorten life. If the public is unaware of this fact, it is because totalitarian countries, usually so lavish with statistical tables, delicately conceal their mortality statistics.

But when, in 1939, the Soviet census was declared a state secret and the census takers were shot, economists pondered the mystery and discovered that the population increase from 1929 to 1939 was only 4 million (an increase of only 0.25 per cent a year) instead of the 30 million that would have corresponded to the normal birth rate (3.5 per cent of the population).[2] One deduces that the death rate was about 3.25 per cent, which makes the average life span in the U.S.S.R. about 30 years, just as it was in the Middle Ages. Thus the fact is confirmed again that strong tactics on the part of the ruler go hand in hand with short life among his subjects.

Pink cheeks and noisy vocal chords are natural in the young, so it is an easy matter to fill the ranks with healthy young people shouting the catchword. On the other hand, old men lose blood as well as illusions, and their health, physical and mental, can be maintained only by genuine social efforts. A nation has less reason to boast of the condition of its youth than of the condition of its aged.

The explanation for the popularity of youthfulness among the totalitarians is very simple. Youth serves them as an army to carry out disagreeable tasks: overwork, austerity, wars—tasks for which it is advantageous to exploit the excess of energy of the young, their lack of attachments, their impulse toward sacrifice, as well as their igno-

rance, their tendency toward fanaticism, their naive inclination to become enthusiastic over supposedly grandiose projects. But in these parade regimes youth is as roughly treated in fact as it is flattered in words, for with totalitarians it is a long way from the phrases of propaganda to everyday realities. And it is amusing to see them become involved in a new contradiction, that existing between the enthusiasm of youth—which implies impetuousness, change, and enjoyment—and the discipline, traditionalism, and penitence with which they season the daily bread of the young.

But how are these youthful zealots to be made to serve senile ambitions and at the same time ensure that their zeal does not run over in the wrong direction—the direction leading to hatred of injustice, to outbursts of fraternity, and other subversive enthusiasms? To avoid this danger the totalitarians have sedulously aped the great idea of Sparta: indoctrinate and standardize the young from the earliest age, stimulate their bodies while hardening their minds. A former inmate of Buchenwald related that the majority of S.S. men who ran the camp in 1938 were between the ages of seventeen and twenty. "They were already so brutalized and sadistic that it was a constant wonder . . . how this could have been achieved." [3]

This astonishment proceeds from a romantic concept of youth: generous spirit, tender heart, age of love. But a more realistic view discloses in the young a certain hardness of heart and frequent perversity. Like the child who is taught to repress his urge to bite and hit, the adolescent must learn to tolerate other people's opinions and to feel suffering when he has caused it. These states of mind are not innate in man, and in morals, as in art, refinement is the fruit of long education. It is not by chance that 75 per cent of the members of the Nazi party were under forty

years of age, while the Social Democratic party had only 40 per cent of its membership in that age group.[4] If the young are more easily aroused to fanaticism than adults, it is because they have not yet been immunized against hasty outbursts by the recurrent obligation—often dearly bought—to respect the personality of others.

YOUTHFULNESS OF THE LEADERS

Or is it the youthfulness of its leaders that totalitarians have in mind?

In another variation on the theme of stagnation, the totalitarians accuse the democratic regimes of not knowing how to replace their leaders. How many times have they said: "It is always the same old horses hitched to the same ministerial chariot, driving around the same old track; dictatorships at least bring us new faces."

This is another delusion. The dictators and their followers are seldom men new to the political scene. On the contrary, they are mostly former agitators, trained in circus acts, who have spent their lives trying to sneak in among the team pulling the chariot. Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin, and Stalin were in the political game long before they gained the power whose tricks were well known to them. Those who fight to become cabinet ministers are no different from those who fight to remain as such; and furthermore, political virginity, like the other type, can be lost only once. Even if the dictator were a complete novice who had never been heard of before, nonetheless, once he had secured control, he would take his place among that unchanging group of politicians who are used over and over again for a new start—with this additional aggravation: that he bobs up again inexorably every morning, whereas aspirants to the democracies' cabinets are contin-

ually going in and out of office. For no matter how great the virtues of a permanent dictator, he cannot possess eternal youth, whereas in principle nothing prevents the democracies from replacing their officials as often as necessary in order to have a continuous display of chubby cheeks in the presidencies.

This demagogy about the vigor of leaders implies that it is preferable to be governed by the young. This concept, held by modern totalitarians, differs from that of the ancient, who thought quite the contrary.[5] But both theses, as is usual in any fanatical ideology, lack a logical basis. If experience, which is supposed to increase with age, gives old people an advantage, the spirit of enterprise, which is said to be linked to fiery blood, gives the young an equal advantage. As a matter of fact, those few good qualities or defects that depend on age will never outweigh factors such as intelligence, virtue, and courage, which remain nearly constant throughout the life of an individual, since they are basic to his character.

In all their excitement over new faces, the totalitarians repeatedly contradict themselves. Forgetting that they have been clamoring for new leaders, they begin denouncing the instability of democratic cabinets and boasting of the fruitful permanence of their own leadership. Then, forgetting that they have been denouncing the instability of democratic cabinets, they indulge in a wholesale massacre of their own ministers.

All these fluctuations of opinion prove that totalitarians are not very sure of the intrinsic value of either retaining or changing ministers. Their inconsistency is explained by the fact that what really bothers them about a man who falls from favor, as well as about a man who stays in power, is that public opinion and not the ruler has determined who goes and who stays in office. For them, men may be

maintained in power or shorn of it on any pretext, if it is understood that this is done at the behest of the leader. A dictator may make and unmake destinies as he sees fit, but a parliament may not, for they think dependence upon a single person is less degrading than dependence upon many. This is the way lackeys think.

DYNAMISM OF INSTITUTIONS

The enthusiasm the totalitarians manifest for novel institutions betrays once again the homage that vice so often feels obliged to pay to virtue. Because democracy has accustomed its peoples to the idea that its government must continuously improve its care of them, totalitarianism therefore must be able to do even better for its people. What the totalitarians try to delude people into believing, when they claim that their regime is "younger" than the democratic, is that its institutions are more dynamic.

All modern dictators claim to be the champions of progress, and they manage to get themselves accepted as such by many liberals. And all dictators scorn the democracies for their lack of action and of new ideas. But a simple examination of the facts reveals that most social innovations have arisen in a democratic climate. I am not speaking of verbal revolutions inscribed solely on the pediments of buildings or in purely propagandistic constitutions, but of profound changes that have come about in the life of peoples, such as those that resulted from trade unionism, from labor legislation, from social insurance—changes actually put into effect by the democracies but which became inoperative under the dictatorships.

Since a revolution does not take place without glitter, the glitter is often taken for the revolution, and the demagogy of the dictator for dynamism. Thus the U.S.S.R.

made such a hullabaloo about the supposed upheaval its people were to experience that everyone came to believe the Soviet proletariat the most advanced in the world (though it was retrogressing to a state of slavery) and Soviet women the most emancipated (whereas actually they were the most exploited). And we fail to recognize the revolutionary importance of changes when they are introduced quietly, as was the case with socialized medicine in Great Britain. And yet the fact that surgical care, prostheses, and medical care of all types were made absolutely free overnight and for the whole population constitutes a fundamental reversal of old established social relations in a very significant area: that of life and death. No totalitarian state has yet written such a record on its list of dynamic accomplishments.

On the cultural and moral planes, where modern pro-Soviet totalitarians like to be evaluated, it is again in the democracies that imaginative enterprises are found to be most frequent and most daring: sexual education of children in the Scandinavian countries, legalization of contraceptives in Great Britain, artistic and philosophical audacity in France. In all these fields the dictatorships demonstrate only the dullest conformity. How do those commissioners of morals who under Hitler limited women to the three K's [6] and under Stalin decreed that "free love is an offense to socialist morality" [7] differ from the old fogies of Molière, for whom knowledge, for women, was to be limited to telling the difference between a doublet and a pair of breeches? Only in that Chrysale, in Molière's *Femmes Savantes,* limited his obscurantism to the education of young women, while his descendants Crysalheimer and Crysalov concern themselves, one with "de-Semitizing the theory of relativity," the other with "de-bourgeoisizing the calculation of probabilities." [8]

Those who persist in differentiating between a reactionary totalitarianism and a progressive totalitarianism, without realizing that this is just as absurd as saying there is a difference between darkness and absence of light, will rebel especially at seeing me make no distinction between the two in the ethical and cultural fields, for it is in these fields especially that they regard them as antagonistic. They readily agree that the two totalitarianisms are related in method but consider that they are radically opposed in values. However, the difference between the totalitarianism that some are still innocent enough to call "leftist" and everything that until now has been considered the *avant-garde* spirit of the true left is written in indelible signs. One of the most convincing is the servile adulation of the dictator that is found in the U.S.S.R. in a form that had not been known since the Pharaohs: "Stalin is the inspired master of the workers of the whole world," [9] "the wisdom of the ages," [10] "a star has appeared in the firmament of the world," [11] "the greatest of men of all times and all periods." [12] A second proof is the revival of that most backward of all practices of reactionary societies, the auto-da-fé: "We burn more books than the Nazis, and even more [books] by Marxist authors," wrote the Soviet diplomat Barmine; [13] and Margoline, director of the library at Pinsk, put it more precisely when he stated that "the books were to be burned or torn apart so that no single page could be read." [14] No sooner was Hungary won for "progressive" totalitarianism than enormous quantities of ten thousand works were confiscated in libraries and bookshops and sent to factories to be converted to pulp; most of the publications of the Academy of Sciences were destroyed in the name of progress, under the pretext that they "reflected the ideas of a vanished world." [15] Among the books destroyed, the Hungarian press mentions most

of the classics, from Cervantes to Goethe, the works of the Negro novelist Richard Wright, Proust, Sartre, Maurois, and others. In the Soviet Zone of Germany, the works of Kafka, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, Joyce, and writers of similar stature underwent the "progressives' " purge by fire.[16]

In the field of education, as well, the so-called leftist totalitarianism vies with reactionary totalitarianism in retrogressive attitudes. Potemkin, former Soviet minister of education, speaks here like a fascist schoolteacher: "Persuasion merely hampers the training of disciplined people"; [17] and Kemenov writes: "The role of Soviet literature is to assist the state in educating youth." [18] The West has long since forgotten, or probably never knew, an education as dogmatic, chauvinistic, and distorted as that which today trains the unhappy Soviet children for their future role as slaves.

In the arts, literature, and the sciences, the "advanced" totalitarianism shows exactly the same tastes and the same language as the "narrow-minded reactionaries" (as they were called by the old-time Communists) who looked upon psychoanalysis and surrealism as morbid deviations. The Soviet press makes the same kind of remarks about Picasso and other *avant-garde* artists as do those "hopeless petit bourgeois" who derisively ask whether the paintings aren't hung upside down: "Men of the next generation, when they discover these unwholesome, repulsive works, will not call upon an art critic but upon a psychiatrist . . . humanity will be ashamed to have produced such a period," [19] writes a former director of cultural relations in Moscow. And he demands that paintings be made clear—so that the leader will easily be recognizable, we suspect, complete with decorations and chest thrown out.

Changes in customs and social life are not only much

less profound under dictatorships than under democracies but also much less durable. Since the totalitarians do not allow public discontent to express itself, they have every facility for taking back the advantages they have extended. For example, the right to strike, which no democracy has ever seriously dared to revoke, was flouted by all the totalitarian states almost as soon as it was granted. The same was true of the eight-hour working day; the Soviet dictatorship began by giving the workers a seven-hour day, then compelled them to do the forced labor of the *soubotniks* and *voskresenje*,[20] and finally sent them off to labor camps, where the twelve-hour day is in force, without any rest at the week's end.[21] All those vestiges of the past that had been outlawed by the revolution of 1917—internal passports, corporal punishment, death penalties, exorbitant salaries to executives—were reintroduced by the dictatorship.

Why do dictators grant these privileges, if it is only to take them away again so quickly? The fact is that when they assume power they must give lip service to the demagogy they had to employ in order to win, and which is still fresh in the minds of their followers. Aware of the persistent effect of a great initial shock, they take care to overthrow—to the accompaniment of blaring publicity—a few age-old institutions: within twenty-four hours, venerable newspapers are transformed into yellow journals, eminent professors are insulted, a few treaties are torn up, a great many heads fall, and this is sufficient cause for world opinion to remain astounded for several decades, convinced that the totalitarians have no equal for brilliance in reforms. But the only brilliance has been in the fire of destruction, for impassioned judgments always go hand in hand with impassioned acts.

Once secure in the saddle, totalitarians disregard the

reforms that celebrated the beginning of the new regime. They remove the marrow and the blood, embalm the body, and parade their mummy in the public squares on the anniversary of the revolution to convince the people that they are devoted to progress. All the while, however, they are actually busying themselves with binding society hand and foot in the system of chains they have declared sublime. Even the few spectacular measures introduced on the occasion of their entrance on the scene turn out to be not very revolutionary. Either the measures merely catch up with a level of reform already attained in most other countries (such as the eight-hour day introduced by Mussolini, and vacations with pay granted by Peron); or they are carnival novelties that are soon punctured (such as the "leisure for the people" that Hitler organized when he came to power and that he exchanged shortly thereafter for a sixty-hour week); or they may be more significant on first view but carried out so as to lose their revolutionary character, as was the case with Stalin's nationalization efforts.

If we refuse to degrade the word "revolution," and use it to mean a fundamental change in an established order, it is clear that nationalizations that continue or increase the age-old exploitation of the workers by a handful of privileged persons cannot be considered revolutionary. The only kinds of nationalization that may rightfully be so considered are those in which the abolition of private property really benefits the people. Nationalizations that are carried out only for the profit of the state—which is identified with the dictator in totalitarian regimes—should more properly be called extortions, for in the last analysis they amount to the sovereign's plundering his subjects—a practice as old as the world, illustrated by the bloody confiscations by the kings of Persia, by Nero and Septimius Severus, by the expropriation of Jewish property by the

kings of Spain and by the Nazis. Extortion is also the only fitting name for that tremendous bureaucratic expropriation known as collectivism, which occurred in the Soviet countryside at the beginning of Stalin's personal dictatorship and which falsely wore a halo of progressivism.

Aside from these fiscal raids baptized with the pompous name of *avant-garde* economic experiments, the reigns of Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler revealed themselves as dynamic only when it was a question of persecuting individuals. In this field we must give them due credit. They actually abolished, in record time and with irresistible force, the right to think, to assemble, to travel, to strike, to marry Jews or foreigners.[22] In fact, they displaced, deported, shot, asphyxiated, and annexed whole populations on an unheard-of scale.

We thus reach a clearer view of the respective merits of democracies and dictatorships with regard to dynamism. Putting aside the extremist, but ephemeral, attitudes of the early days of the regime, we may say that on the social, moral, and cultural planes dictatorship is static and democracy mobile, whereas on the human plane of manipulating the life of the individual, dictatorship is bold, because it is cynical and cruel, and democracy timorous, because it is scrupulous and merciful. Totalitarianism is stagnant in the field where it should be dynamic—that of institutions—and frenzied in the field where it should be prudent—that of human beings.

This partly explains why dictatorship deludes people about its dynamism. The personal plane, theatrical and concrete, blocks their view and makes them forget the institutional plane, which is dull and abstract. Work out juridical guarantees for the citizens, seek conditions for a fair electoral system, discuss the amount of a social security tax, and they will call you a bureaucrat; but remove offi-

cials, pre-empt and deport with the stroke of a pen, make people parade, drudge, procreate, die, and they will stand open-mouthed before your audacity. There is no more common error than to mistake agitation for action, decrees for reforms, shouts for achievements.

It is true that dictators have a freer hand than democratic officials in changing the course of events. But because they are dictators they use this power only to eliminate the obstacles in the way of their omnipotence and never to improve the condition of the people. The only form of dynamism they can legitimately claim is that expressed by the ease with which they can dispose of their opponents (the form that makes many politicians in democratic countries eye them with envy). With this exception: the dynamism of dictators is merely tinsel. That which democracies take a long time to effect is the true substance of progress; that which circulates rapidly in dictatorships is only its shadow.

One need only reflect serenely to realize that totalitarianism, behind all its bluff, cannot help but be harsher than democracy. The revolutionary-sounding ideas thrown as fodder to the people, to justify seizing exclusive power, are unable afterward to stand the test of facts. Since they constitute the dictatorship's only emotional and ideological capital, they must be transformed into dogmas—into sufficiently congealed and sacred formulas for the people to continue to venerate them without examining them. And since every power, no matter how arbitrary, must account to public opinion, no matter how muzzled, no dictatorship has been able to do without an all-powerful dogmatic mechanism: the cult of "race" under Hitler; of the fasces under Mussolini; of Marxism-Leninism under Stalin and his successors. Democracy, having no need to justify itself by invoking a doctrine of taboos, can exhibit greater suppleness.

It is because all totalitarianism is as inevitably crystallized around a single credo as around a single man that it always becomes conservative.

IS DICTATORSHIP AN INSTRUMENT OF DYNAMISM, AT LEAST IN A REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD?

But, my critics may retort, your arguments do not apply to the years of severity when regimes crumble and others arise out of the convulsions. At such times dynamism on the institutional plane depends specifically on the determination to strike swiftly and hard on the individual plane —in other words, it depends on the severity of the dictatorship that one has the courage to set up and which then finds its glorious justification. This argument deserves attentive study, for it is by presenting dictatorship as the armor of the revolution that its prestige is preserved not only among Marxists but among many sincere but disheartened friends of true progress.

This typical reasoning, which is found in its pure form in Saint-Just, is as follows: Profound transformations in the social structure can be effected only by revolutions; revolutions arouse the fury of the supporters of the old regime; the supporters of the old regime, being in a minority, can counterattack only by means of plots; and the only defense against plots is through dictatorial methods. Had it not been for Robespierre and Lenin, they claim, nothing would have remained of the revolutionary conquests of 1789 and 1917.

We have just seen that the facts contradict the premise that nothing in the social order can be transformed substantially without revolution. Karl Marx himself, after the failure of the 1871 Commune, ceased to consider violence as the only possible leaven of progress: "We do not deny that there are countries like England, America . . . where

the workers will be able to realize their goals by peaceful methods," [23] he declared. But even assuming the truth of this harsh law, which condemns history to advance only by gunfire, it does not necessarily follow that a revolution can succeed only when it is prolonged by a dictatorship.

We take the two words "dictatorship" and "revolution" here in their strict meanings, the first to designate a regime in which the will of the ruler is imposed by force, without any concern for public opinion; and the second to designate a profound change in an earlier system of government, by the rupture, within a short time, of the political, economic, and judicial structure that supported it, this rupture being imposed counter to the existing laws, so that it implies recourse to violence. Up to this point I have used the word "revolution" rather in its broad sense, which puts the emphasis on the nature of the change that takes place rather than on the way in which it occurs. But in what follows I shall use the word in its narrow meaning of a violent change, for only in the case of upheavals effected by force does the question arise of consolidating them by a dictatorship. It is, moreover, because the element of violence is common both to revolution in this sense and to dictatorship that many people confuse the two concepts. We shall see that, on the contrary, they are distinct to the point of being diametrically opposed.

Let us again examine the historical examples cited in support of their thesis by those who assert that dictatorship is indispensable for the successful completion of a revolution.

Let us first consider the French Revolution, which introduced significant political and social changes: suppression of social orders and of the privileges of the nobility; the coming into power of the Third Estate; establishment of small farms for peasants; abolition of trade guilds and

of administrative imprisonment; and separation of powers, with the legislative power pre-eminent. Violence was first limited to a few days in the summer of 1789 and was marked by few deaths, after which it took only three years to consolidate all these conquests—three years of a dynamism such as had never before been known in history, but three years of legal procedures in the course of which the *ci-devants* enjoyed all civic rights. By 1792 the old regime was dead.

Dead in all its essentials, to be sure, for in three years the greatest dynamism cannot efface all the accumulations of a thousand years. Some vestiges of bygone times remained, but these need not have excited the reformers so much. Yet the intoxication of the upheaval had made them bitter-enders, and the conflict was sharpened by their intolerance about matters socially unimportant but keenly felt from the individual standpoint: the suppression of titles of nobility (when the privileges had already been abolished) persuaded aristocrats, who until then had refused to join the Count of Artois, to emigrate; and the civil status of the clergy sent over to the opposition the priests who until then had accepted the new order. War broke out in this atmosphere of domestic storm, a war that was not neccessary in order to safeguard revolutionary achievements and that was desired more by the Girondists than by foreign kings. It was not, then, the inevitable sequel to the great adventure begun in 1789 that brought on the dictatorship of Robespierre but the dangers generated by external war and the exasperation of internal hates—both avoidable, and both caused by fanaticism.

Now, what did this dictatorship do? In some instances, to be sure, it completed the work undertaken during the dynamic and democratic phase of the revolution, by decreeing, for example, universal suffrage and compulsory

public education (but without having time to effect them). But it indulged in such excesses against justice and freedom that it exhausted the patience of the public and provoked the Thermidorian reaction, which, in its turn, engendered the Empire and the Restoration. During this third period only certain economic changes, which had become too deeply rooted to abolish, were retained, but the revolutionary spirit was dead and most of the political achievements of 1789-93 were eliminated. Robespierre has consequently taken his place in the long series of sectarians who stifle what they try to preserve.

In the Russian Revolution it can also be observed that the more dictatorship, the less revolution. It was from March to December 1917, in an environment of ardent discussion and democratic fervor, that the fundamental social changes took place: abolition of the privileges of the nobility and of the administrative castes; formation of the soviets; separation of church and state; abolition of the death penalty; creation of a democratic parliament; freedom of the press, of assembly, of association, of travel; establishment of small peasant properties.[24] The success of the Bolsheviks was not attributable to their claim to be the most advanced of reformers, but the most determined of pacifists, whatever this might cost Russia and her allies. However, even the success that this pacifism-at-any-price brought the Bolsheviks remained limited, since in the constituent assembly they obtained only 25 per cent of the votes, as opposed to 75 per cent for the democratic parties (Socialists and Bourgeois).

But as soon as Lenin forcibly dissolved this democratic assembly in January 1918 and began to act as a dictator, his decrees took on a counterrevolutionary flavor: dispersion of non-Bolshevik soviets, reintroduction of the death penalty, abolition of freedom of the press. If innovations

did continue to appear (nationalization of factories, limitation of salaries for high executives, equality of the sexes), it was because freedom was still tolerated within the party. But as the dictatorship was increasingly felt within the party ranks, counterrevolutionary acts multiplied: militarization of trade unions; conferring of discretionary authority upon factory managers, who became "prefects of power";[25] forced federation of allogenic nationalities (Georgia); the bloody repression of the sailors' revolt at Kronstadt—"these top-notch revolutionaries" whom Lenin and Trotsky, forgetting that it was to them the Bolsheviks owed their power, addressed in these terms: "Surrender or you will be shot like rabbits."[26] When Stalin in 1927 established total dictatorship by exterminating all opposition within the party as well as within the country, the last revolutionary vestiges were definitely swept away by reintroducing domestic passports,[27] which Kerensky had abolished as early as February, 1917 "because they were police instruments for the oppression of the masses";[28] requiring labor cards, on which the workers' slightest mistakes were noted;[29] forbidding workers to leave the factory;[30] forbidding marriages with foreigners;[31] establishing death penalties for strikers;[32] permitting the death penalty for children over twelve,[33] for theft and larceny, for infractions of discipline in transportation services, for flight abroad;[34] legalizing the practice of hostages;[35] reintroducing and sanctifying systematic and wide social inequalities, etc.

Thus the two classic examples invoked by those who maintain that revolutionary dynamism is destined to failure unless it is supported by the superdynamism of a dictatorship prove exactly the opposite: dictatorship destroys the basic changes set in motion by revolution.

Even if we had arrived at the opposite conclusion, it

still would not prove anything in favor of the Soviet dictatorship. Indeed, it is incorrect to use the single word "dictatorship" to designate alike the courtly absolutism of a Louis XIV, the enlightened terrorism of a Robespierre, the vacillating despotism of a Nicholas II, and the nightmarish atrocities of a Hitler or Stalin. There is no common denominator between the republican Robespierre—who had thousands beheaded but allowed Danton to inveigh against him before the Revolutionary Tribunal and relinquished power at a single vote of the Convention—and the Pharaoh Stalin, who dishonored and exterminated hundreds of thousands of opponents and tolerated no word not in his praise. Before even considering whether or not the example of the French Revolution justifies a dictatorship, the Communists should be prevented from taking advantage of this example to cover up the monstrous crimes of the Soviets.

One characteristic proving conclusively that dictatorship is not set up primarily to safeguard revolutionary gains is this: dictatorship is always more cruel toward deviators from the revolutionary forces than toward adherents to the former regime. The Jacobin Terror was directed especially against the *indulgents* and the *enragés:* of its ten thousand victims, only three thousand were of the aristocracy. In the Soviet Union, Lenin's first targets were the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, and decades after the final crushing of the White Russians, Stalin continued to persecute the most authentic revolutionaries—not only the moderates who demanded a little democracy at least within the party [36] but also the extremists who insisted on five-year plans and agrarian collectivism.[37]

This basic fact reveals that postrevolutionary dictatorship is essentially a *reaction.* But since this reaction is

undertaken by those newly come to power and not by the fallen supporters of the old regime, it misleads its contemporaries, who take the permanence of a few figureheads and a certain jargon for proof of fidelity to the revolution, as if the cowl made the monk, or the label the wine! The illusion is furthered by the inertia that affects the judgments of most men. Having once succeeded in absorbing the enormous swing described by a revolution in going from a backward regime to an advanced one, they will not admit the failure of the revolution unless they see it execute exactly the same swing in reverse. If its degeneration takes a third path, they will deny the degeneration. At most, they will consider the dictatorship as an abscess that need only be lanced in order that the substance and values of the revolution be found intact underneath. Those who allow themselves to be thus misled fail to understand that the function of dictatorship is precisely to take away from the revolution its true values—men—in order to put robots and policemen in their places.

Under Czarism, the factories belonged to private owners, but the men capable of collectivizing them were allowed to live—at the worst, in exile or in Siberia. Under Stalin's dictatorship, the men capable of organizing a harmonious social order were eliminated much more drastically than under Nicholas II. On the ministry's balance sheet the Soviet dictatorship carries the factories under the heading of "collectivity," but it has reduced this collectivity to the condition of an army of automatons. On the day the dictatorship does fall, nothing will be left, after the massacre of its rulers and the burning of its false balance sheets, but a host of executioners so dulled by terror that Russian society will be in a far lower state than in 1917. A strange materialism, in truth—that of these Marxists who assert that a revolution may be saved by exterminating its very

artisans, and that the agents of progress are not men but plans!

The Communists who justify the most barbarous dictatorships by the necessity to deal with the plots of the former privileged classes run counter to the very philosophy they invoke. In his famous passage: "Mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve," Marx states that higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself.[38] According to Marx, the violence of a revolution is of the same sort as that of childbirth; it is limited to helping the birth of social forms conceived long before, and whose free development was no longer hindered by old privileges that had been outdated. A chick cannot hatch without breaking its shell, but it is not the breaking of the shell that creates the chick.

In order to establish the dwarf dictatorship as a legitimate heir of the giant revolution, the Communists denatured the concept of the social role of violence. In an effort to justify the blood on their consciences, they led people to believe that revolutionary philosophy—whose prestige they meant to exploit—conferred an inherent virtue on violence, whereas revolutionary philosophy really conceded to violence only a surgical function. Because in one propitious circumstance violence was able to destroy evil, by putting an end to disastrous hesitation, the Communists assert that henceforth violence will be able of itself to create good. They no longer restrict it to the final effort, exerted on a single occasion, of tearing down the dilapidated roof of a building; they make it the very principle on which they claim to erect the building. Because violence, in a limited quantity, may occasionally turn out to be necessary to destroy the bonds that hold in check a

social order already in gestation, our epigones resort to it in unlimited quantities to build a social order out of nothing—a typical aberration, like that of an imbecile who, seeing a crop saved from crows by a few rifle shots, would undertake to raise crops by spraying the ground with machine-gun fire.

From the true Marxist conception, we may deduce the following:

Either: the new institutions established by the revolution are in harmony with the economic and cultural development of the country, the law adjusts itself to the fact, and the state to society. Then the new power has nothing more to fear from the former ruling class and can allow it, without danger, the same freedoms as it gives other citizens. Such was the case during the three years of real dynamism that changed the face of France from 1789 to 1792. When the Third Estate assumed political power, it had in fact been carrying on the direction of the economy, and even of the underlying social order, for a long time, through the agency of ministers, magistrates, popular priests, and bourgeois superintendents of the king. Robespierre's dictatorship merely postponed until 1830 the definitive establishment of its supremacy.

Or: the new revolutionary institutions are not matured or are not desired by the great majority, and in that case no dictatorship can prevent the triumph of the counterrevolution. All revolutionary enterprises undertaken before maturity or carried too far have, in fact, resulted in social retrogression. If it is the new power that succumbs, the privileged classes, wishing to prevent a possible repetition of their misfortunes, set up a more reactionary regime than the one they administered before the revolution; this happened in the case of the French Restoration. If it is the postrevolutionary dictatorship that wins out, terrorism

too prolonged becomes a system in itself, one that turns out to be a step backward compared with the old; this happened in the case of the Soviet regime. The continuance of a dictatorship after a revolution proves that the new order was not "historically mature," or was no longer so under the extreme forms that led to the dictatorship; so that what the dictator defends by terrorism is not the progress whose champion he declares himself to be, but his own power.

Let us point out, finally, that in asserting that dictatorship compromises rather than consolidates revolution, we are in agreement with another aspect of the doctrine the Communists use. Engels, in fact, wrote: "When it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organization, the masses themselves must take part and must already have realized for themselves how matters stand and what they must fight for." [39] This quotation suggests that no revolution is possible without the consent of the masses and, consequently, without democracy, since in order to obtain this consent, the masses must be permitted to express themselves.

In addition to its role in lancing an abscess, revolution has a more important role as educator. At its inspiration, people until then held in bondage awaken, and long-passive social strata begin to stir and can thus, in a short time, serve their apprenticeship in political responsibility. Now, the characteristic action of dictatorship, on the contrary, consists in cutting off the masses from any real participation in power, in drying up their political life, and, in its modern totalitarian form, in petrifying their psychic life.

The idea that a dictatorship can consolidate the gains of a revolution is a contradiction in terms. Either the revolution is successful and has no need of a dictatorship, or it turns into a dictatorship and disintegrates.

If a democracy is authentic, its principal effect is to put laws permanently under the control of the will of the people, to make "paper" rights accord with actual facts, and to make the political superstructure flexible enough to evolve continuously with the social substructure, so that bloody upheavals will no longer be needed to reconcile the two. By leaving the way open for protests and for the requirements of new forces, democracy permits the state and society to keep pace with each other. It is the only kind of harmonious advance and, accordingly, the only truly progressive kind. Thus we return to our original conclusion: paradoxical as it may seem, democratic calm is much more propitious to dynamism than is totalitarian passion.

THE CAUSES OF MODERN INFATUATION WITH REVOLUTIONARY DYNAMISM

The revolutions of the nineteenth century, which brought about beneficent changes at relatively low cost, induced men of the twentieth century to accept as axiomatic—contrary to the concept that had prevailed up to that time—the hypothesis that any upheaval necessarily brings with it some salutary result. This is why, in our day, we see the most ill-matched parties take revolutionary stands without regard for the atrocious blood ransom these now entail. Even the groups that in the last century were hostile to subversive pressures, when these were merely smoldering, today are aroused to the point of infatuation when the upheavals have become raging fires. As often happens in history, men rally to anachronisms, and public opinion distributes its favors inopportunely.

But when we look more closely we discover that the present craze for revolutionary dynamism expresses no

aspiration toward emancipation. If revolutionary formulas have acquired so wide an audience even among the most extreme counterrevolutionists, it is not so much because public opinion values profound changes as because it admires the glory of battle. Only ideals implying a risk and involving life arouse its enthusiasm. The trumpets of insurrection beguile its ears, while its heart is closed to the murmurs of progress. This pledge of blood that men demand of ideas before they venerate them is no novelty. The halo of sacrifice belongs to the arsenal of the oldest moral values; hence, ironically, revolution derives a large measure of its attraction from the most ancestral traditions.

On the other hand, the agitation carried on for the past hundred years by socialism, in protest against the wretchedness and slavery of the workers—an agitation noble and just in principle—has rooted a bad conscience in the heart of modern societies. To be sure, critics have denounced political corruption before now, but up to the eighteenth century political affairs were merely a hobby of the ruling classes: they might demand the resignation of a minister; the more philosophical might speculate on how to be sure of having only good ministers; but they were not deeply concerned with the underlying social order. Their conscience was not bothered by the division of society into the powerful rich and the enslaved poor, for this seemed always to have been a part of the order of things. It is only in this century that this division seems scandalous, that it gnaws at the very substance of our political life, that it has become our permanent collective guilt.

At the same time progressives were inveighing against this injustice, science was offering a means of wiping it out that seemed simple and infallible: the machine. The apparent ease of this remedy could only strengthen the acute

feeling of guilt. When to all this was added universal suffrage—the first outlet for a people who until then had been more silent than resigned, and which transformed the pitiable poor man into a voter to be wooed—it became evident that the first article of all professions of political faith was to become: The present situation is hateful, it must be changed. Any policy would be judged infamous if it did not profess to be dissatisfied, demanding, completely intent on better tomorrows. No longer would anyone dare say that the ruling system was perfect—not even those who were profiting from it. No longer would anyone dare restrain the thin hands that reached out to pick the fruits—not even the skeptics who thought those hands would grasp only shadows—for did not the pariahs at least hold their heads higher merely because they had stretched out their hands? Political parties were so spurred on by the success of social demands that all felt obliged to take their places in the ranks of the innovators.

But once in these ranks, you are overcome by dizziness. It matters not where you set your feet so long as you move. If good lies in movement, why should not virtue lie in speed? We can realize all too well that men, whose daily bread is bitter, should try to realize their dreams during their lifetime; and, grasping at the future, even though prematurely, bring themselves a victory over that eternal enemy of mortals: time. Perhaps the most important role of future inventions will be to permit the great works of civilization to be completed in a time short enough so that the generation beginning them may be able to enjoy them, or at least to judge them. But in the meantime, how can we prove to the impatient that this victory is merely a delusion if time has been forced and not integrated, if wills have been forced and not allowed to blossom gradually? Humanity has thrown itself into a sort of headlong flight.

How can it be held back if it thinks that what it is fleeing is hell, and what is ahead is paradise?

Modern technique has encouraged the present infatuation for revolutionary dynamism not merely by the promise of this paradise but also by the example of its own vitality. Technique is prodigiously rich in innovations. No accomplishment gives it rest, no audacity intimidates it. It repeatedly overturns its foundations; every decade it extends its power. By a simple process of imitation, and without stopping to ask whether the transposition is valid, the public is led to hope for a flow of innovations in the realm of human institutions just as torrential as the one that dazzles it in the field of industrial achievements. But human institutions are not so easily revised as an airplane model, and therein lies the tragedy.

The totalitarians keep up the public's infatuation with dynamism by identifying the criteria that apply to governments with those that apply to individuals. In the case of an isolated individual, dependent upon his muscles alone, speed is sometimes important. But society is not a four-legged animal bounding in flight through the forest shadows; it is a network of institutions. For example, it permits the distribution of drinking water to houses, and its virtue consists not in pumping more and more cubic feet of water faster and faster, but, once the optimum quality and flow have been established, in providing them to the whole population and for all time.

When the totalitarians venture out of their animal frame of reference to think in social terms, it is revealing that the code they spontaneously adopt is that of the most highly mechanized of collective bodies: the army. Dynamism, indeed, in its double meaning of mobility and deployment of force, is an essentially military virtue: the ability to change position in the twinkling of an eye, to

surprise the adversary, to set a multitude in motion by brief orders and without explanation or justification, to advance without rest, without concern for ruins, without compassion for victims—this is what is required, this is what is essential on the battlefield, this is what the totalitarians dream of extending to the field of everyday living. Animal or soldier: these are the only types they can focus upon. To lead society like a flock of sheep or a platoon of soldiers: this is their ideal. But the ideal of democracy is to free society from the values, as well as the methods, of war.

Rapid changes have a virtue other than that of assuring victory: they forestall thinking. For the modern world is not only considered hard, it has also become incomprehensible. As soon as we stop to consider all aspects of even the least important reform, we feel as though we are being plunged into a labyrinth of interactions, of contradictions, of difficulties that confuse and paralyze the mind. For most citizens it is normal that the obligation to know so much has become a burden as unbearable as social injustice. They will therefore be grateful to the leaders who protect them from analyzing situations by overwhelming them with decrees. Revolutionary dynamism, which seems to take short cuts through the thick underbrush of the modern world, satisfies both their hunger for change and their thirst for simplicity by giving them the illusion that they are escaping from complexity by speed.

It is always tempting to draw hasty and extreme conclusions, first because there is no need to think afterward; then because one is not endangered by the higher bid of a competing reformer; and finally because one can claim to have shown courage before the masses. For the masses may not realize that more courage is required to recognize the limits of a theory than to transgress those limits, and that

science is not the school of certainties but of approximations.

These few points do not exhaust the great problem of the modern infatuation with political dynamism. Let us add that, in giving way to this feeling, public opinion harks back to the old Manichaean tendency, which limits every deliberation to a choice between two extremes and which in our day seems to have regained its primitive vigor—total revolution, or unlimited reaction; planned society extending to complete loss of will, or *laissez faire* to the point of negligence; absolute dictatorship, or dissolute anarchy.

The concepts of evolution and of compromise have undergone a disastrous devaluation; they are scarcely used any more except in the disparaging sense of cowardice and stagnation. But compromise requires tolerance, especially when so many controversial subjects in our hard daily life incite us to fanaticism. Institutions, social life, family life, are only possible because of compromise—compromise with other persons' dispositions, interests, passions, and opinions. In politics it is compromise that embodies the scientific spirit, or progress; for, as reason and humanity require, compromise takes into account all factors, whereas the ukase, which calls itself dynamic, is in reality only a sorcerer's device.

Because of its leniency, reformism has been discredited by the revolutionists, who criticize it for instinctively tending to freeze social life instead of incessantly proposing new horizons for it. But, all things considered, experience has confirmed reformism's essential ideas, and everything good we have attained has come through it. Revolutions, on the contrary, over the same period of time have provoked nothing but steps backward in a dark procession of sweat and tears.

3

Are democracies more corrupt than dictatorships?

The exploitation by totalitarians of the occasional dishonesty of democratic politicians is part of an ancient tradition. Its *leitmotiv* is the supposed contrast between the authoritarian machine allegedly striving only for the national welfare and the unruly parliamentary assembly, allegedly infested only with petty selfish schemes. Sparta set herself up as the champion of integrity as opposed to Athenian corruption, and ever since it has always been to cries of "Down with the thieves!" that the shadiest attacks on liberty have been launched.

Nepotism and venality do not spring only from freedom. The fascists have repeatedly denounced the "republic of little friends," but jobs and favors have gone to friends and servants of the caste in power at all times and under all regimes. Let us deplore this injustice, but at the same time let us recognize that it is universal. If it is true that the Corsicans take care of their compatriots, the Jews of their fellow Jews, and the New Dealers of the people who voted for them, it is no less true that Caesar surrounded himself with Caesarists, Hitler with Hitlerites, and Stalin with Stalinites.

The term "nepotism" originally meant the conferring of principalities by the pope upon his illegitimate children. Despite their virtuous indignation at favoritism in democratic regimes, totalitarian leaders, following Napoleon's example, have packed the government with their close relatives. Stalin gave his brother-in-law Kaganovich an important post for life, and conferred on his son the most undeserved military promotions. Mussolini made his son-in-law Ciano the most important minister of the country and even gave salaried posts to his mistresses. Certain "republics" of South America are practically transformed by their *caudillos* into a field of exploitation for their families: the brother imports, the brother-in-law exports, the father-in-law, minister of communications, transports, and the head of the family, naturally, deports. Hitler, who had no family, lavished honors on favorites such as von Ribbentrop and Roehm (before the latter was shot). As for the petty tyrants, whose ambition has always been to imitate the big tyrants, they, too, indulge in the distribution of sinecures within the family. Do we not read every day in the Soviet press such petty reproaches (since real criticism is barred) as: "The high officials are concerned only with finding berths for their families and friends. . . ." "In Leningrad, the assistant director of the G.A.P.U. [the bureau of druggists' affairs] has named his wife manager of pharmacy No. 21, and his brother of No. 67. In Kirov, half of the pharmacists are relatives." [1]

Every absolute authority necessarily relies upon courtiers, whether they reach that position by birth or by preemption. Now, courts are much more favorable breeding places for dealings in influence and for the intrigues of selfish interests than are public parliaments. Courts are corrupt not because of the social origin of the courtiers but because they are courts—that is, schools of servility. "Power

corrupts," said Lord Acton, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Sinecures and financial scandals have existed from time immemorial and flourish in all political climates. Not only the tribunes of the democratic Greek city-states accepted money from the Persian kings, the enemies of their country; so did the manly ephors of totalitarian Sparta; Herodotus assures us that "no Spartan could resist a bribe." In Rome the Senate elections were recognized as a regular opportunity to fill one's pockets. The underhand dealings of Caesar and Crassus, who frequently failed to distinguish between the coffers of the state and their own, are well known. Even the oracles showed themselves susceptible to bribes: the Alcmaenidae, an important Athenian family, bribed the priestess of the Delphic oracle to predict an unfavorable future for their enemy Pisistratus.[2] In the oldest texts of Upper Egypt we find constant allusions to the venality of the priests; the sons of Eli abused their positions as priests to extort money from the people; the absolute power established in the countries of the Far East has always been shot through with corruption; Genghis Khan had practically bought out the whole entourage of the emperor of China, so that his son Kubla Khan could come and pluck the crown like a ripe fruit.

What sentiments animated the gods of Olympus themselves, who granted their favors only in exchange for offerings? Need we recall the tremendous traffic in relics, Masses, and indulgences that flourished for centuries in the shadow of the Cross? Must we call to mind Philip the Fair, king of France, who coined counterfeit currency, and the kings of England who relieved the goldsmiths of their treasures that had been deposited in the Tower of London, and the sultans who became rich from piracy? It is well known that the election of the most absolute and

Catholic king of Spain, Charles V, as Holy Roman Emperor, was achieved by gold furnished by Jacob Fugger, the banker of Augsburg, and that on more than one occasion the most noble Spanish Cortes allowed themselves to be convinced by bags of pieces of eight. William III and George III of England bought votes to ensure the financial cooperation of Parliament. Pepys' famous diary is a detailed account of the bribes offered him by the most fashionable figures of his time, and of the corruption that went on around him; similarly, *La Chambre Dorée*[3] of Agrippa d'Aubigné is nothing but a long tract on the corruption of the magistrates in the time of Charles IX and Henry of Navarre. The Duke of Marlborough, after seven years of victories over Louis XV of France, offered him a reasonable treaty of peace in return for two million pounds sterling.[4] Fouché, Napoleon's minister of police, built an enormous fortune by the speculations he was able to undertake as a result of his access to secret information. His august patron made the battlefields of Italy his first gold mines.[5] Marshal Bugeaud, the conqueror of Algeria, withheld two million gold francs from the amount that he negotiated with Abd-el-Kader, in the name of the French government, and used the money for the expenses of his own electoral campaign. On the eve of Napoleon III's *coup d'état,* his half brother received half a million francs over and above his salary as minister, and he himself handed out large sums to the conspirators, among whom was Maupas, the prefect of police.[6]

We would never finish were we to list the famous examples of corruption that have left their mark on history like smallpox. In our own time, when the Italian and German dictatorships collapsed, we discovered that their ascetic dignitaries had amassed colossal fortunes. To cap the climax, these hypernationalists had frequently tucked

away their money in foreign countries. The German armies, to which even the French, deceived by propaganda, gave credit at least for the incorruptibility of fanaticism and the loyalty of discipline, turned out to be more adept at depredation than any Marseilles gang would have dared to be. German soldiers sold French civilians the German Army's precious gasoline; commissary officers took part in the black market; billeting officers dealt in requisitioned apartments; and transportation officers in permits to pass from occupied to unoccupied France, thus allowing more than one de Gaullist to undermine the occupation forces. "The Communist party is the party of decency," shouted Jacques Duclos, whose troops, fraternally mingling with the fascists on February 6, 1934, had rushed to assault republican institutions, to cries of "Down with the rotters!" But when the dirty linen is washed and the truth comes out, we learn that the men who had the confidence of the party cheated about damages, vehicles, tires, and ration tickets, and that under cover of supposed political reprisals they committed personal swindles, such as the theft of six million francs from the Banque de France at Abbéville, of which the Communist underground never saw a cent.[7]

Under the Soviet administration, commonly held to be cruel but honest, venality is just as rampant. A Rumanian doctor who escaped from a labor camp managed to cross the U.S.S.R. from Siberia to Europe by bribing officials of all ranks whom he happened to encounter. He told me one day: "People in France are constantly making the most elaborate and subtle speculations about the profound nature of the Soviet regime. Take my word for it, it does not deserve such attention. Its essential characteristic is not state control of means of production, or the deification of the leader, or even police surveillance of everyday life, but

simply that it is the most corrupt regime history has ever known." El Campesino confirms this disillusioned opinion when he relates that his escape from Soviet prisons was possible thanks only to the corruption that reigned at all levels of Soviet society. In the U.S.S.R., where everything has its price, he was arrested three times and each time managed to bribe his way free.[8] Even in the sacred conclaves of economic planning, corruption is used as a means of covering up delays, disappointments, and disorders: "Each factory must carry out the plan that has been outlined for it; since the official market cannot supply good machines or separate parts or raw materials, it is only by bribing the officials that one can get these elements and thus avoid being haled into court."[9] When highly placed Soviet corrupters, to avert public indignation, publicize the corruption of lower officials, we learn that the managers of the economy are willing to falsify to secure decorations and rewards; that the highest Soviet officials have been thrown into jail for embezzling government funds;[10] that the ministers of the lumber industry, Malychev and Lomov, and the chairman of the planning commission and chief commissar Sakkens have been convicted of embezzlement; that everywhere "abuses, thefts, and unscrupulous acts are chronic."[11] Above all, one of the evils that is a constant subject of discussion in the "paradise of workers" —but which no longer exists in the capitalist world—is the theft of the workers' wages by factory managers.[12]

THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

This picture of corruption in the totalitarian regimes is not intended to make people believe that it does not exist also in the democratic regimes. I have no thought of minimizing the famous scandals of the spoils system under Jack-

son or Teapot Dome under Harding, of the Suez Canal and of Stavisky in France, of Loewenstein in Sweden. My thesis is that the exploitation of political power for the material interests of those who hold it constitutes a general, and not a specifically democratic, phenomenon.

Captious spirits often think that the abasement of the morality of politicians is caused by their plunging greedily into the maelstrom of modern civilization. However, among the peoples nearest a state of nature, particularly in the African tribes of Ho-Ewe, Dahomey, and Yoruba-land, corruption flourishes in all its splendor.[13] And even among the American Indians, more than one Judas has been known to sell his services for less than thirty pieces of silver. We have also seen it displayed from the beginning of history, when there was no question of a decadent civilization, as is demonstrated by the penalties Hammurabi, King of Babylon in the twenty-second century B.C., had to establish to cope with the venality of judges. We shall therefore not stop to consider this complaint, which is all too patently without foundation.

Another reason advanced by the totalitarians to explain the supposed spread of corruption in the democratic regimes is that the democracies, by nature indulgent, do not penalize the unscrupulous behavior of their representatives as severely as do the dictatorships. According to this idea, inspired by the proverb "Spare the rod and spoil the child," the more severe an administration, the more honest it is. Now, despots sometimes do cut off the heads of officials caught red-handed, but this severity has never succeeded in implanting honesty in public service, if we are to judge by the abundance and the extent of the deviations in terroristic regimes. Just as hanging has never reduced the percentage of crime—the standard argument offered against the death penalty—so has Draconian repression

never restrained officials from accepting bribes. It is, rather, excessive severity that seems to encourage prevarication. In a democracy one can survive the failure of an economic enterprise or of a political mission. In a dictatorship, since success is a matter of life and death, there is no limit to the irregularities a man will be ready to commit in order to carry out successfully the task entrusted to him.

It is misery, poverty, or mediocrity, much more than the inadequacy of penalties, that incite men to steal and politicians to accept bribes. In China and the U.S.S.R., where the standards of living are the lowest in the world,[14] corruption has attained its highest level. Everyone knew this to be true of China, whose faults were not concealed from the general view, but few were aware of it in the U.S.S.R., which hides its disgrace behind its iron curtain.

The excessive regulation characteristic of totalitarian regimes also adds to the ferment. In all human societies, the greedy have always tried to enrich themselves beyond legal limits by theft, fraud, pillage, or corruption, and they have chosen one or the other of these means, whichever was the easiest at any given time—pillage in wartime, fraud in a period of commercial expansion, corruption when the state tightened its hold on normal affairs. Here is a link that has the force of a regular syllogism: cupidity, being a constant coefficient of human nature, multiplies more in a given sector as this sector has more importance. Hence, it has greater effect upon the political apparatus as the latter has greater power and ramifications. That is why democracy, a regime of limited powers, is less favorable to corruption than is dictatorship, in which power is omnipresent and omnipotent.

History readily confirms the fact that corruption has increased as government took control of more extensive domains of public activity. When kings were chiefly con-

cerned with levying tribute and dispensing justice, it was among the honorable judges and tax collectors that the evil was seen to blossom. Another great concern of princes, besides justice and the treasury, was war, and this, too, has always given rise to innumerable incentives to venality: the distribution of commissions, of fiefs, of awards, of contracts, the stake of victory itself, were just so many opportunities for bribing the officials of one's own country or of the enemy's. As the power of Rome extended into distant colonies, we note, along with the swelling of the central administration, a corresponding increase in the corruption of the central administrators. In the totalitarian regimes, where the state controls all affairs, public and private, military and civil, economic and cultural, external and internal, material and spiritual, it is no surprise that in addition to the standard bribes offered in democratic states—for an appointment, a government contract, an import license, a decoration—we encounter bribes to satisfy the most trivial needs of daily life: living quarters, priority at a hospital, theater tickets, a bed in a miserable shack, a railroad ticket, or passes of all kinds. Corruption is proportional to the volume of affairs dependent on the whims of an absolute ruler.

However this constancy of cupidity may hold for human nature taken *a priori,* society succeeds in changing this nature somewhat. Political organization may have the effect of making state employees more honest or less honest than the average run of men. Moreover, I believe that democracy tends to reduce dishonesty to the extent that it allows the public to look behind the counters of government offices. "The mere fact of the publication of the essential facts would cure some grave evils," wrote Theodore Roosevelt, "for the light of day is a deterrent to wrongdoing."[15] The effect of public access to the records,

so favorable to honesty, is aided in the democracies by the separation of powers and by the existence of numerous independent institutions—universities, labor unions, newspapers—that exist beyond the authority of the central power and that form so many tribunals ready to turn the spotlight on corruption. But the totalitarians, like the underworld, operate hidden from our gaze. A brazen censorship conceals their intrigues from the eyes of the people, who are hypnotized by a servile press into believing that their government is "harsh but honest." In the democracies a politician's slightest deviation from integrity is trumpeted to the four winds and stirs up indignant protests. It is not that the leaders in the democracies are more corrupt, but that the detectors of corruption are more sensitive.

Honesty, as a matter of fact, has never been the preoccupation of princes, for whom the common welfare is a discretionary property that they may cut into and sew up at will without defrauding anyone, since they have no commitment to anyone. In a democracy, the common weal being public and the politicians merely its managers, responsible to the people, integrity becomes the very foundation of their offices. It is not surprising that we had to wait for democracy to render unnatural and to abolish not only the financial caprices of great nobles, commissioners, and sovereigns, but also those methods of corruption that used to be referred to, without malice, by the institutional name of "venality of offices," and which so enlightened a reformer as Montesquieu still defended.[16] It was not until the advent of democracy that judges ceased to buy their positions and to require the guilty parties to pay their fines directly to them. The public must indeed have a poor memory when it forgets the tremendous progress public morality owes to democracy, and when it lends an ear to

the hypocritically outraged denunciations of those whose only thought is to reinstate the crowd of intriguing petty pirates surrounding the august head of the state.

FAULTS WORSE THAN NEPOTISM AND CORRUPTION

From the very fact that democracy permits criticism of the supreme power, it furnishes a much better protection against corruption than does dictatorship. It pays the price of its tolerance in letting itself be vilified by scandalmongers, who rouse the rabble about the most insignificant letter of recommendation from a congressman, but who hold their peace about the millions of innocent victims whom the dictators sacrifice to their megalomania. But corruption, although very regrettable, is not the worst vice that may be found in a government. Extortion, for example, is much more serious, because it effects the plundering of peoples on a much larger scale and by more barbarous means. Extortion is the resource par excellence of despots. First, it is clear profit—instead of paying to get what you want, you take it by force. Second, because it is not just the expedient of a shopkeeper, it assumes a heroic character.

In the Middle Ages, as in antiquity, extortion was a common practice, and whole nations were cruelly afflicted by it. Periodically, the nobles would murder the moneylenders to whom they were indebted; mass pogroms and expulsions were frequently motivated by the desire of a king to appropriate for his own use the property of the Jewish community. Governors of distant colonies, who enjoyed unlimited power, despoiled the natives of their natural wealth and of the fruits of their labor; in the course of time rulers were accustomed to practice extortion in territories farther and farther away from the

mother country. It was not until the advent of totalitarianism that the practice once more spread shamelessly throughout the plunderer's own land and was carried on at the expense of his fellow citizens. Mussolini and Hitler confiscated the property of Jews and liberals; Stalin deprived thousands of muzhiks of their land and cattle, abolished workers' unions, and, like Philip the Fair, went so far as to make counterfeit money.[17]

These extortions involve such enormous sums that the good citizen no longer recognizes the familiar swindle. He can see in this infamous category only relatively negligible malpractices, committed with the aim of obtaining personal advantages that everyone covets—money, automobiles, houses, women—in short, an easy life. But as soon as the passions that cause the tyrant to transgress moral laws assume a scale that passes the understanding and the greed of the average mortal, as soon as the spoils cease to serve appetites and serve ambitions, they lose their shameful character in the eyes of the people and put on the gaudy finery of conquest. Petty larceny is robbery; grand larceny is History.

The average taxpayer responds with indignation to the idea of a few public servants mishandling funds derived from his taxes, but if he were to examine the facts calmly, he would see that even in the speculations of the august Julius Caesar the amounts involved reached an appreciable fraction of the total public treasury, whereas in contemporary democracies, corruption, even if it amounts to significant sums, represents only an infinitesimal percentage of the billions that circulate daily in public channels.

No one will deny that the concern of men in high places for their personal interests is detrimental to the government. But the tendency of totalitarians to explain every political question by this single factor is a sure sign of the

mediocrity of totalitarian thought, especially when the interest is reduced, with discouraging monotony, to that of the purse. For other interests may be much more powerful in the mind of the leader and more fatal in the life of the people, such as ambition for power, satisfaction of authority, or the mere need to gratify ingrained prejudices.[18] Think of the untold misery suffered by the Egyptian fellahs because of the obsession of the monarchs of the Fourth Dynasty, Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus, with building mortuary monuments of such splendor as no man of the past or future could ever dream of. This senseless pile of stone, raised by men's muscular strength alone, exhausted the resources of Egypt for long reigns to come and left it more devastated than a war would have done. Think of the misfortunes of the muzhiks because of Stalin's obsession for setting up in his country what he had understood of Marxism. Think of the tragedy, blood, and financial loss inflicted upon the people by doctrinal fanaticism—the wars of religion in the Middle Ages, Marxism-Leninism under the Soviets, Nazi anti-Semitism. The doctrinal fanaticism of rulers has always been a far more serious source of spoliation than their love of money, which it moreover implies, since the sine qua non for the triumph of obsessive prejudices is to make propaganda or to resort to force —the world's most expensive commodities.

If he were to examine calmly the conduct of state affairs, the taxpayer would discover that the cost of dishonesty of some officials is negligible not only by comparison with the total budget but also, in dictatorships, by comparison with the enormous drain on public funds of tribute paid to the henchmen of despots, to the obscurantism of their laws, and to their military ambitions. We must remember that autocracies are founded upon the egotism and megalomania of the autocrat: thirsting for command, for exclu-

sive rights, for empire, will he not swallow up the people's billions to gratify his own passions? Is this not a much more scandalous way of stealing the money, labor, leisure, and the very life of the poor?

But when war breaks out and the state asks these same taxpayers, so touchy about money, to shed their blood, see how humble and resigned they suddenly become, how they neglect to examine the political actions that led to this emergency, how readily they obey. See how the holocaust is precipitated by the call of the high priest! And yet war is neither more noble nor more legitimate than misappropriation of public funds. Certainly we must shout "Down with the robbers," but first we must cry "Down with the tyrants." Five hundred dishonest democratic officials, if they are tolerant and peaceful, do much less harm to the people and their finances than a single dictator who claims to be upright but is intolerant and barbarous.

THIEVES SHOUTING "STOP THIEF!"

Let us beware as we would the plague these destroyers of liberty who make a show of honesty while they conceal their desires for plunder. It is partly because the mirage of speculations afforded by power is so strong in them that they can think of the misdeeds of politicians only from the standpoint of greed. How many *coups d'état* have been carried out to shouts of "Down with the thieves" by reformers who, as soon as they gained control, emptied the public treasury and plundered the citizens in a much more shameful manner than their predecessors, the only difference being that they went one step farther and locked up the protestants.

Totalitarians, like Tartuffe in Molière's play, parade such a touchy virtue only in order to better camouflage

their deep-rooted vices; but the proof of their hypocrisy lies in the fact that as soon as they gain power they rule by crime alone. Fouché encouraged gambling because he derived from that vice the funds required for maintaining his mobile columns of informers.[19] Himmler urged his government to exploit human perversions and to utilize as auxiliary forces gamblers, alcoholics, debtors, homosexuals, and other unscrupulous persons.[20] His overly modest Führer, who had decreed the wearing of slips underneath women's bathing suits, showed no hesitation in urging German maidens to become pregnant in order to provide cannon fodder. As for Stalin, who built his power upon duplicity, informing, forgery, and theft, he consolidated it by extortion, calumny, sadism, and assassination.[21]

The assumption of power by a totalitarian paragon of virtue has always resulted in the immediate lowering of the moral level of the whole population. The people of France have shown themselves noble or vile depending on whether they were living in freedom or under a despot. Under Napoleon III, for example, it was possible to record sixty thousand denunciations in a few months in the department of Hérault alone. The French, renowned for their solidarity against the police, again became informers under the Nazi occupation. I am well aware that even under a dictatorship there are always upright men who fight against the current and prefer persecution to moral decay. But, just as in economics it is enough for the demand to exceed the supply by a small amount to provoke a crisis, so in sociology it takes only a limited number of informers to plunge the whole country into an atmosphere of spying; and it is precisely this type of person that every tyranny multiplies.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not the people who determine the ethical nature of the leaders; it is the moral-

ity of the leaders that colors the people. When the example from above is bad, the people become bad.

It is not hard to understand that when such venerable authorities as the schools and the government incite individuals to slander, to humiliate themselves, to turn spy, the resulting moral degradation inevitably overruns the boundaries set by the regime. The dictator, a sorcerer's apprentice in this matter as in others, discovers that the creatures he meant to train as slanderers and spies have become swindlers, traitors, and ruffians.[22] Thus he suffers the proper fate of those who employ villainy in order to stay in power, but who at the same time expect virtue to reign everywhere else. Spurred on by the supreme power, immorality gains such momentum that it insinuates itself into the immediate surroundings of the despot—among his favorites, his deputies, his bodyguard, into his mistresses' boudoirs, even into the soul of his only child. He who plunges his people into filth will find himself in the mud. Villainy cannot be kept under control.

THE SCANDALMONGERS

We have seen that there are forms of social wrongdoing more injurious to the efficiency of government and the welfare of the people than the unscrupulousness of officials, forms that true liberals have always fought against with the same vigor as against parliamentary dishonesty. The totalitarians, however, are not scandalized by these forms. On the contrary, they excuse, perpetuate, and aggravate them; for example, militarism, which they raise to the level of a veritable religion.

They consider stealing a plebeian vice and therefore contemptible, whereas they hold murder to be a noble passion. It has always been the ruling classes who have wielded the

sword and slashed the peasantry, and the peasantry who have committed larceny and been hanged for it. Hence all those who admire the powerful and scorn the little man—and this describes the totalitarian attitude—will exalt war and condemn corruption.

Fascist organizations based on popular appeal, such as the Communist parties, have not modified this ancient order of values. We need only observe them to see that they are quicker to denounce rogues than wolves. They may jeer at the industrious bourgeois, but they are deeply impressed by the aristocratic brute. The imperialists they criticize are the Phoenicians whose fleets cover the world selling nylon stockings or Coca-Cola; but the imperialists who fascinate them are the Huns, who pay no attention to property, persons, conventions, or treaties, and who replace bargaining with the flashing sword. That is why Stalin always admired Hitler;[23] why he always strove to spread the untruth that a people is more deeply enslaved when a foreign power wins its favors by money rather than when it is subdued by force.

Of course, the sword is also useful eventually to secure the moneybags, and the Communists who denounce dollar imperialism are once more found in their favorite role of thieves shouting "Stop thief!" For they, too, get around people's minds with the base metal; they, too, recruit accomplices with the lure of spoils. But it is no longer shameful when the spoils are those of war rather than of speculation, when the gold is refined by the blood of victims. This mercenary concept and practice also existed among the Nazis and fascists, who waxed indignant at the slightest underhand dealings of democratic politicians but considered their own dishonesty perfectly natural. They, of course, were the powerful and were entitled to treat the lowly harshly, whereas the democratic statesmen are

merely bookkeepers who must appear when called for, with their accounts in good order. In their totalitarian philosophy, borrowed from a feudal system of thought, the power obtained by consent, which is a servant's power, must be more virtuous than the power a master derives from his rank or from his janissaries. The whole effort of the Communist party has been to construct, with the political adherence of a multitude reduced to the old oath of vassalage, a machine whose strength is of the seignorial type: unquestioned, insensitive to the fate of little men, marked by panache, jangling, brassy, insolent and consuming. The misfortune is that this brutal ideology of the totalitarians fits in beautifully with a bookkeeper's ideology, especially with that of many liberals. For the latter still have a vague feeling that they are little people, bound to a conduct all the more exemplary because they have had the audacity (which they have not yet quite gotten over) to seize political power.

If the totalitarians get so excited about corruption, it is not because they have any more authentic scruples about public morality than do the liberals, but because they are more inclined to apply the lash to individuals than to analyze ideas. A corrupt act is not a theme for logical analysis; it is a juicy windfall that allows leaders to stir up audiences by attacking a criminal. Thinking is no longer required—it is enough to attack. It is no longer necessary to plunge into the subtleties of ideology; it is enough to let the big bubbles of hate rise to the surface, where they have only to burst. The dictators, whose sole aim is the conquest of power, without regard for procedure, pity for victims, or respect for their followers, will pick up their customers in the most expeditious manner: by prostituting popular indignation. Everything that entails the debasement of the individual or shame for society will serve their

undertaking, which consists of making their fortune out of public misfortune. Scandals are their favorite food. They are scandalmongers.

Ideas, to which the democratic politician is forced to appeal, are not only harder to put to work than a list of turpitudes but even slower in gaining credence. They thus represent too slow a course for the totalitarians, who are always highly impatient. This accounts for the importance, in their propaganda, of the flattery that so gently smooths the path to the heart. The people are flattered in various ways by the denunciation of scandals. First they are flattered on the very sensive matter of money, since they hope the robbers will be punished and that their money will be recovered. Next, their vanity is flattered, since they see that they have pierced through the occult schemes of high officials and have thus risen to an understanding of real politics, which, as everyone knows, is the kind inspired by money—the kind they can understand without effort because they recognize the familiar law of life: that each looks after his own interest. They feel themselves secretly rehabilitated in observing that this law governs the acts of people in high places as well as their own. Finally—and here lies the most subtle of the various kinds of flattery that the scandalmongers offer—they believe they are considered honest, from the mere fact that they are invited to express their indignation.

The satisfactions of the decoy and the critic may seem contradictory, since one is derived from saying "He does as I do" and the other from saying "I am not like him." But people live quite comfortably among contradictions. Better yet, they are more captivated by ambivalent sentiments, which is why their psychic register often appears richer than that of cultivated persons, who, in order to appear consistent, must often block off one whole half of

their mind. Just like children or nature, ordinary people accept and enjoy indiscriminately and often simultaneously the most contrary sorts of spectacles, persons, and behavior: pomp and austerity, severity and indulgence, theft and honesty, captain and shepherd, bonesetter and scholar. In this heterogeneous humus that baffles logical minds, totalitarians settle like old-timers and leisurely cultivate all the passions that can benefit them.

The intoxication of taking vengeance on a wrongdoer overcomes the people all the more readily since, as we have pointed out, an atavistic tendency impels them to draw satisfaction from the misfortunes of others. Didn't our ancestors take pleasure in the spectacle of human sacrifice, of gladiatorial combats, of public executions, of crucifixions and hangings? All this sadism, part of the festivals of the human race for thousands of years and only recently outlawed from human recreation, still stirs deep within us and sparkles in our eyes. There are still legions of men ready to betray their cultural heritage as soon as they can indulge in the pleasure of hunting the prey they love: a criminal threatened with punishment.

Agitation against corruption has yet another advantage for the totalitarians. It develops in the masses aggressive instincts favorable to bellicose and repressive enterprises. Since the masses are naturally indolent and gregarious, they must be goaded by banderillas, which are provided by campaigns against thieves. For thieves make people see red but not far; they arouse frenzy without awakening the subversive spirit. The subversive spirit is dangerous because it threatens regimes, whereas the aggressiveness of the crowd is useful because it is directed against individuals. That is why the totalitarians are careful, in training the crowds to hate, not to urge them on at the same time to a revolt that might involve the principle of the social

hierarchy. Fury directed against corruption fulfills this double condition of being volcanic in its manifestations and conformist in its inspiration, since it tends to restore the tarnished purity of the traditional order of affairs, the moral of which is summed up in this commandment of property owners: "Thou shalt not steal." At the same time, again exploiting the facilities of ambivalence, the totalitarians will ostentatiously break the other commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," in order to show that they are not intimidated by prejudices and that they are really the emancipated avant-gardists they claim to be. And the battle cry that results from this amalgam, "Thou shalt kill, that thou be not robbed," achieves that remarkable coupling of sadism and submissiveness—sadism toward persons and submissiveness toward institutions—that accounts for the success of totalitarianism.

Totalitarians who explain all the difficulties of the democracies by the underhand dealings of parliamentarians are the faithful heirs of those narrow-minded reactionaries who ascribe all economic depressions to the laziness of workers. How unworthy it is never to get excited except at a display of turpitude, never to harangue the political arena unless your opponent has tricked you, and never to show any concern for serious themes and fruitful debates, such as the fate of civilization, the equity of laws, or international peace!

But it is not without reason that the enemies of freedom are inverting the actual hierarchy of political evils. Agitation about traffic in influence or money, by getting the public to gossip interminably, diverts it from the fundamental problems of power. By concentrating the attention of the masses on the moral faults of individuals, it blinds them to the political springs of oppression. By filling them

with an aggressive fury, it empties them of wholesome thoughts, and this is so much gained for the enterprises of enslavement. At the bottom of their hearts, what fault do the totalitarians find with elected parliaments? Being elected. But they cannot say this. So they busy themselves with shouting that all elected representatives are rotten, which is true only of a very few. Then they hammer the refrain "rotten representatives, rotten representatives" into the people's heads so diligently that one day, taking advantage of a moment of aberration that they have provoked in the public through their fury over some corrupt individual, they succeed in doing away with all elected representatives. Thus they will have succeeded in destroying the sovereignty of the people without openly having had to repudiate the representative principle.

Behind their ostentatious indignation against venal sins, the scandalmongers hope to hide dictatorship, that capital sin of history.

4

Is democracy essentially weaker than dictatorship?

> "There are two powers in the world: the sword and the spirit. . . . In the long run, the sword is always beaten by the spirit."
>
> *Napoleon to Fontane* [1]

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN DAVID AND GOLIATH IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Many people, not disturbed by the way in which World War II shattered their views, continue to think that the muzzle and the goosestep, though blameworthy, make a country strong, while discussion and freedom, though praiseworthy, weaken it. Even some democrats who consider civil rights indispensable in combating abuses of power believe that these very freedoms weaken national strength. Their conviction is not based on an historical investigation but more simply—and more strongly, it seems to them—upon good sense. When everyone gives orders, is it not obvious that no one obeys? Internal struggles ensue and the country is weak. But if no one wastes his time discussing the orders of the leader, everyone works and the country is strong.

Those who identify absolutism with efficiency, and freedom with impotence, forget that there have been vigorous democracies like England, and sickly autocracies like the Russia of Nicholas II and the France of Napoleon III that collapsed in the face of military uprisings. Did not the democratic allies conquer by force of arms the Italian, German, and Japanese dictatorships? Was not the atomic bomb developed in America, that country of eternal discussion, and not in Nazi Germany, that nation of discipline?

In spite of these powerful examples, public opinion continues to consider democracy constitutionally feeble and totalitarianism functionally vigorous. Let us examine the mechanism of the two systems to see whether the totalitarian system really contains a ferment of strength and the democratic system a fatal weakness.

PERTINENCE OF PROJECTS VERSUS SPEED OF EXECUTION

It is certain that men cooperate better if they have common convictions than if they quarrel about everything, and there is no doubt that close cooperation leads to greater efficiency. But there is no less doubt that men whose ideology is most in conformity with general aspirations and actual possibilities have more chance of success in their undertakings than those whose views are Utopian or contrary to the natural desires of the community in which they propose to act. Community of thought is not the only factor that conditions success; quality of thought is even more important.

Thus, the disagreements between isolationists and interventionists certainly weakened the United States, but much less so than the Third Reich was weakened by the

unanimous belief that the Jews must be exterminated. This created enemies in the very circles that were ready to applaud Germany. It disorganized German economy, and, by sending eminent scholars into exile, it gave opponents an advantage in the race for atomic armaments. It was inevitable that a nation obsessed by so insensate a doctrine as anti-Semitism should finally be conquered. No matter how united, docile, and exalted a people shows itself to be, it is weak if it serves projects that are absurd, ill-founded, or ill-planned; and its intoxicating unanimity conceals all the more surely its aberrations. To believe that music must bring forth Leninistic harmonies, that physics must be de-Semiticized, the calculation of probabilities de-bourgeoisized, non-Aryans sterilized, the kulaks exterminated: to believe all this, even unanimously —above all, unanimously—must lead a people to catastrophe just as fatally as would an unquestioning faith in the food value of potassium cyanide. To stimulate strength, unanimity must be applied to sensible ideas. But can credos exist that are at the same time totalitarian and reasonable? This I doubt, because throughout the course of history events have proved that men have been unanimous in folly, above all. This is very natural, since unanimity almost always results from the passionate adherence of the unthinking to the decisions taken by one person who professes to think for all, which can be nothing but the claims of a madman. Democrats, on the contrary, may draw from their tolerance an essential reward, for their eternal discussions, at which dictators poke so much fun, safeguard them against fatal errors. "We do not consider discussion as a stumbling block in the path of political action," said Democritus, "but as an indispensable preliminary to wise action." Indeed, in politics discussion plays the role of regulator and alarm signal; to the extent

to which it permits the calculation of faults, the foreseeing of risks, the repetition of warnings, it justifies the time spent in thrashing out problems, by the extra security thus obtained for undertakings. Hitler and Napoleon learned the hard way that speed of execution cannot always compensate for pertinence of projects.

It is curious that those who invoke good sense in support of so many false apothegms are never inspired by it in the few cases where it furnishes valuable indications. It cannot be denied that the old saying "From discussion comes light" does have a certain amount of good sense, so that when we see a state ban all debate, forbid any inspection, gag all criticism, the conclusion is inevitable that it can be acting only in perpetual darkness. Censorship conceals the public's dissatisfaction from the Führer just as it conceals the mistakes of the Führer from the people; it is a blinder that makes dictators resemble those horses whose capers have the crowds gaping for a time but which sooner or later run into a ditch.

A conclusive example of this is the decision to make war —taken by the Führer and blindly carried out by his people—that proved to be the most disastrous mistake ever conceived by a government. Hitler underrated English and Russian resistance, neglected the naval factor, counted too much on American neutrality—in short, misjudged on every score. Such a venture could never have been undertaken by any of the democratic governments, so criticized for their vacillation. When we think of the fate that this error brought upon Germany, of the millions of dead, of the apocalyptic physical and moral ruin, we may say that Hitler, because he was ill-advised by his peers and not at all advised by his people, was the worst scourge Germany had to undergo in more than a thousand years. Hamlet is frequently cited as an example of the tragedy caused by

thought not followed by *action,* but, as Bertrand Russell judiciously observes, the totalitarians ought rather to meditate upon the fate of Othello, on the disasters provoked by *action* not preceded by *thought.*

Moreover, if we are right in saying that the convergence of wills gives strength to the social body, it is so only to the extent that there are really wills converging—wills of free men, not of slaves. "In union there is strength," says the old proverb, and the totalitarians, acting upon this primary truth, begin to bludgeon all their subjects who oppose them, and then later are greatly astonished by the inner weakness of their regime. In union there is strength —only if strength has not forced union. One often forgets that desertions, which were negligible in all the democracies where union was freely accepted, reached enormous proportions in the U.S.S.R., where union was imposed by force. From June 22 to October 18, 1941, two million Soviet soldiers surrendered without fighting. Von Bittenfeld, who perished after the unsuccessful plot against Hitler, gave this important testimony: "In spite of the handicaps created by the brutal and insensate Nazi racist policy, we raised to our profit more than half a million Soviet soldiers. Particularly in the early months of the war, mass surrenders took place. At this time I could have gone off on patrol as a cavalry officer and brought back thousands of voluntary prisoners." [2]

THE MIRAGE OF HIGHER OBJECTIVES

Why is absolutism, which in fact dooms power to blindness, so often mistaken for clairvoyance? It is because people come to believe that by conferring an unquestioned pre-eminence upon a leader, the nation has empowered him to see afar, beyond its local eddies, enabling him to

guide it unerringly toward its great objectives. Thus the people may be saved from misfortune if they obey a leader, a leader entirely free of the slough in which only vagrant politicians enjoy floundering.

As soon as a supposedly higher objective has been determined upon, it seems logical to consider daily concerns as petty, and the anxieties that stem from them as paralyzing; therefore it is sensible to seek to free the head of government from such anxieties. The totalitarians think that the less the leader feels the heartbeat of the citizens, the more effectively he will guide them to the ideal. And many liberals, giving way to the mirage of these supposedly higher objectives, fall in step behind them, without realizing that in so doing they are implicitly accepting this fallacious totalitarian hypothesis: that the government is not made to fulfill the aspirations of the living but to promote a transcendent order. They fail to understand that such an order is always nebulous, and that by trying to serve it they exhaust the nation in visionary enterprises without preparing it any better for real problems.

Thus, Stalin's omnipotence as high priest of a final goal did not prevent the chaos resulting from the first military defeats of 1941 from being just as great in the U.S.S.R. as in any democratic country. El Campesino, the Communist general of the Spanish Civil War, who witnessed the phenomenon, writes: "Factories hurriedly closed their doors, leaving nearly all their employees in the street, without wages, without direction, completely abandoned. . . . The most authoritarian, the most centralized government in the world displayed under those circumstances complete incapacity. At the most critical hour, authority, organization, and centralism evaporated." [3]

Basically, if the totalitarians make so much of higher objectives, it is in large measure because they are incapable

of cultivating their garden—that activity to which Candide wisely decided to devote the rest of his days, and which symbolizes the only productive cause that can rally democrats: that of well-being, of peace, and of civilization. But since democracy, in order to be served, requires the will of the people to be known, the rulers must listen to the heartbeat of its citizens and not ignore it. What guarantees the health and strength of a regime is the vigor of the blood running through its arteries and not the rigor of its edicts.

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE LEADER MEANS THE FAILURE OF THE COUNTRY

Another deficiency that contributes to weakening the totalitarians is their lack of imagination. The difficulties that stand in the way of the proper functioning of a government are innumerable and diffuse, and in order to pierce their infinite complexity one must be able to look at phenomena both realistically and imaginatively. One must be capable of envisioning a bombardment in its multiple aspects of a strategic problem, a financial loss, and of children moaning under the ruins; one must be able to estimate unexpected reactions as well as foreseeable effects, and to understand that institutions are flesh and blood and that plans have a soul. It is the capacity to feel the suffering of the martyr and the shame of the conquered that holds the man with imagination on the threshold of dangerous enterprises, that gives him a presentiment of the sad awakening after euphoria, of the hatreds that are crushed today but that make their way underground toward an explosion tomorrow, of the limits of audacity, the potential strength of this weak man, the secret weakness of that strong one.

Dictatorships are weakened not only because their mas-

ters are blind but also because their servants are debased. In such a state, selection is based upon gregarious qualities: servility, obedience, resignation, which, though they increase the hold of the master upon his subjects, also diminish his ability to take advantage of the personal value and initiative of individuals. When education, literature, and the press tend to stereotype every individual; when censorship, propaganda, and fear run their steam roller over all intellects, the mind is not only conquered: it is dried up. The intellectuals are frozen into dogmatism, the masses into hypnosis, the cadres into devotion.

To establish this sterilizing fear, a large part of the public resources must be swallowed up in the bottomless pit of a monstrous police force. A considerable fraction of the active strength of the nation is used for the sole purpose of annihilating another fraction of it, and executioners and their victims alike are lost to creative enterprises. At every hour of the day or night a legion of investigators, inspectors, informers is working to track down or manufacture suspects; a second legion is busy arresting and interrogating them; a third is active keeping watch on the second, and a fourth keeps tabs on the third. Whole blocks of buildings, small forts, and underground constructions are built, in which swarms of policemen flit about, filing, making out, and falsifying forms, reports, indictments. Administrative punishments are innumerable, and further battalions of guards, officials, and executioners are needed to carry them out.

Terror is a strong drink. It starts by being stimulating, but it finally brings on delirium. Modern dictators, much more than those of the past, are forced to consume large doses of this poison. It was possible in the eighteenth century to consider a despot enlightened because, for thousands of years, the lawfulness of personal power had never

been called in question—one could still think it enough that a despot should come into the world with a mild disposition and be willing to learn from philosophers to disdain superstitions; this in itself would guarantee the tranquillity of his subjects. But ever since democracy has so profoundly anchored in the minds of the governed the idea that rulers must be accountable to them, modern dictatorships, no matter how nostalgically they eye the good old days of the power of divine right, are obliged to reckon with criticism. To escape protests, they have no recourse but to kill the protestants. In order to keep himself in power, the modern despot must (and he has been quick to transform this obligation into a supreme goal) physically eliminate his opponents, shed more and more blood—blood that constantly brings forth more and more enemies.

Although democracy still succumbs too frequently to totalitarian intrigue, since 1789 it has imposed its scale of values to such an extent on the very ones who scoff at it that the most insolent of despots is obliged to present himself to the people not as their absolute master but as their most zealous and effective servant. But in order to transform his pretended devotion to the people into the obedience of the people to his will, he must display, by way of compensation, successes that will be proportional to the renunciation of their rights, which the people have been called upon to make. To induce the people to swap their freedom for intoxication is the basic operation that every modern despot must carry out. This hybrid power, which borrows its methods of action from absolutism and its propaganda formulas from democracy, is saddled with an exhausting race toward triumph, which General Foy characterized as early as 1820 in this striking sentence: "The necessary condition for despotism in our century is that it lead the nation from miracle to miracle."[4]

The efforts devoted to maintaining the glory of the leader mean that the state must swallow up, in the service of the monstrous eminence of a single individual, considerable funds normally used for social purposes. Furthermore, their obsession with glory obliges dictators to pretend to infallibility, and therefore they must conceal certain sores a democracy might bring to light and heal, without losing prestige. The tumor spreads in darkness. When it can no longer be concealed, it is too late; the whole social structure is infected. To maintain the myth of his infallibility, the dictator is forced to unload his mistakes on his closest collaborators. To safeguard his prestige after each of his reverses, he must lop off the heads of the chiefs of his army, his party, his labor unions, his industry, even of his police. It is because he is determined to appear spotless that he besmirches his entourage. The infallible leader is caught in a vicious circle: his pretension to ever greater success automatically leads him to ever greater failure. The obstinacy of the Nazi troops before Stalingrad was one of these tragic errors, committed to safeguard the prestige of the Führer. The tyrant, because he is determined to save face at any price and on every occasion, inevitably loses his head in a crisis. And since the whole nation has been crouching humbly in the shadow of this enormous, divine head, set on high like a monumental idol, the downfall of the colossus carries the whole nation with it into the abyss.

The dictator, being neither the heir to a throne nor elected by the people, yet forced to satisfy their demands for legitimacy, presents—and takes—himself for the envoy of History, a new earthly divinity who proves to be more bloodthirsty than the heaven-sent idols of the past. The cynosure of all eyes, forever adored and forever dazzling, the despot quickly forgets that he derives his power from

his police and imagines he holds a mandate from destiny. This hallucination, typical of olden times, is as dangerous for modern prophets as it was for the ancients; their confidence in their lucky star prompts them to expose themselves to all sorts of risks, and hence to all sorts of setbacks. There are striking correlations between totalitarianism and Messianism: scorn for logical analysis and the study of facts; intolerance for objections and doubts; pretension to knowledge of the obscure forces that govern the future; half-magical, half-knavish mentality; abuse of revelations; the tragic end of the revealers. In the democracies, on the contrary, all those forces that propel dictators from their pinnacles to the abyss are relaxed by the moderation of the objectives and the flexibility of the means.

THE MAGNETISM OF WAR

The principal reason why the dictator's lust for glory weakens the country is that it tends to satisfy itself in the form most expensive for the community: militarism.

A democratic country in which there is freedom and ease is an irresistible pole of attraction for oppressed peoples and, consequently, a threat to tyrants. Once let students, journalists, or bureaucrats escape from the great barracks where the tyrants jealously shut up their subjects, and let them make their way to the democratic lands of perdition; or let a breath from these lands penetrate the barracks in which the rulers lock their subjects—once let this happen and the seed of heresy will be sown in their minds, and the dictatorship is shaken to its foundations. How can a despot, who cannot allow a single one of his subjects to escape his dictates, tolerate millions of men at his frontiers who seem to make fun of him in their papers and, more insidious still, by their very way of life? The

dictator cannot rest until he has overthrown the democratic dragon everywhere. This explains the aggressiveness of totalitarian Russia: abuse of the veto power in the United Nations, sabotage of the disarmament conference, the blockade of Berlin, civil war in China, military aggression in Korea and Indo-China. This provocative attitude was dangerous for the Soviet regime, but less so than a policy that would permit its slave population to become friendly with free nations. If the war of peoples is not always propitious for the dictators, the fraternization of peoples is always fatal to them.

The totalitarians are also impelled to warlike adventures by psychological motives.

Civil works—scientific research, artistic creation, even athletic prowess—do permit those who excel in them to attain a certain fame that is dependent upon reasoned admiration rather than on mystical transports. Such fame is also possible for more than one person—it contains a sort of inducement to multiplication that can scarcely be to the liking of anyone who aspires to exclusive supremacy. Civic accomplishments scarcely leave room for the gleam of individual fame, for as institutions become more complex, their success depends more on the co-operation and talents of a host of officials than on the exploits of an inspired leader. We may be grateful to a statesman for his success in putting together these modest but effective factors, we may think highly of him and reward him for it, but we are not likely to worship him. Modern democracy, which has taken upon itself the difficult and noble task of permitting an ever-increasing population to live in constantly improving conditions, has less and less use for altars, incense, and triumphal arches, and more and more use for laboratories, criticism, and ballot boxes. The human ideal appropriate to it—a reasonable and peaceful one—is new in

history. That is why democracy is having such difficulty in winning acceptance for it.

Since to organize men democratically they must be deprived to a great degree of martial excitement, and since civil works ill accord with the trumpets of fame, all those who enjoy glitter only in its most elementary form—the blaze of victories—will necessarily have to turn to totalitarian regimes, which alone keep in circulation the type of hero—the conqueror—upon whom the simple-minded can pour out their adoration. Moreover, to feel the intoxication of conquest as frequently as possible, totalitarians adopt terrorist tactics in civil life; they scorn ideological controversies, and incessantly create a class of the damned—easy objects of reprisal.

Here is one of the most distressing cases of imbalance in human evolution: that which exists between desirable political methods, which should be rational, and hereditary psychic reflexes, which are mystical. People should appreciate peaceful levelheadedness for their own good, but in their hearts, ever thirsty for heroic exploits, they admire bellicose daring. They need administrators, but they secretly call for heroes.

If the inevitability of personal weakness urges all dictators on to military conquests, an inevitability of international life condemns military conquests to failure. The fates of Napoleon, of William II, of the Mikado, of Hitler, prove that today there is no longer any room for a hegemony based on arms; the world is too full of powers for any single one to succeed in subduing the others for any length of time. This war machine of the totalitarian, which in peacetime exhausts both the people's finances and their muscles, which in wartime drains their blood and ruins their country, does not have a single chance, in the long

run, of producing any real gain. There is no example of a more fallacious force.

THE SOURCES OF THE DELUSION REGARDING THE STRENGTH OF TOTALITARIANISM

Why does totalitarianism—a type of government so frequently overthrown—so often delude people about its vigor? What are the sources of the notion that it is strong?

This illusion comes primarily from the confusion that causes the strength possessed only by the dictator to be ascribed to the whole regime. That the dictator, as an individual, enjoys enormous power cannot be denied. He can make and unmake destinies, laws, and institutions; at his frown the highest dignitaries tremble, at his written command millions of men are deported. It goes without saying that the aim of aspiring dictators is such power rather than public welfare. In public as well as in private life, the true function of authoritarian precepts is almost always to satisfy those who impose them, not to strengthen those who are subject to them. When we see a tyrant bent on securing blind obedience, we may be sure it is not so much his country as his stomach that will benefit, or, to speak more philosophically, his ego.

But since in popular imagery the leader is identified with the nation, a sort of conditioned reflex will transfer to the nation the attributes of power that the leader alone possesses. This is a transfer all the more tempting because it rests on the magic belief that the powers of the medicine man are transferred to the faithful: in exchange for the devotion they swear to the dictator, the people hope to receive a little of his divinity and thus to realize the dream of power that motivates the subconscious of all weak men. This mechanism explains the need for heroes that haunts

most people. Many of those who condemn tyrants morally admire them deep in their hearts and love to imagine them as infallible conquerors, even when they suffer reverses. Men are myth-loving enough to try to bring back to life, in the guise of the great modern dictators, the demigods through whose intercession they, the wretched, hope to receive a little of the supernatural energy they lack.

In addition, the zealous supporters of totalitarianism do not feed merely upon the spectacle of their leader's strength; they also need to glory in their own muscles. That can easily be arranged: they can strut about in uniform. Then, adding confusion to confusion, they will take the appearance for reality and will believe the country is invincible because its citizens are marching twelve abreast, shouting the same rhythmic chant, heads turned toward one man.

If we go deeper into the problem, we discover that the notion that so freely attributes the element of strength to dictatorships arises in large part from the misunderstanding generated by the resonance of catchwords planted in people's minds without any precision. Each of us aspires to the widest fields of knowledge and yet has received as his lot, alas, but a very fragmentary experience. The area of validity of this experience proves to be so small, by comparison with our thirst for certainty, that we cannot refrain from constantly transgressing it. Thus we extend to the social macrocosm the laws governing our individual microcosm, though they are fundamentally different.

This is the lure to which we yield when we unconsciously measure the strength of a political regime by the violence and rapidity of its actions, merely because these are the usual manifestations of animal strength. This unconscious confusion of public life with zoological life leads us also to applaud the head of a state when we see him

settle a question with a battering ram, without asking ourselves whether he has actually solved it. Alexander's famous exploit of cutting the Gordian knot, which fired so many declared or virtual totalitarians with enthusiasm, is in reality the model of a confession of impotence on the part of an impatient person, for even now the knot has not been untied. Similarly, because a boxer is strong when he gives his opponent no rest, the public believes that a state is strong when it is in evidence everywhere; whereas the obsession of ordering and inspecting everything—truth in the sciences, beauty in the arts, faith in religion, virtue in the family—actually thwarts rather than encourages the effectiveness of the administration. Because a lion is brutal, one thinks that a brutal state is as strong as a lion. But the manufacture of airplanes is quite a different kind of work from tearing one's prey to pieces.

The judgment of a political regime—which is, when all is said and done, merely an instrument in the service of an objective—must be in terms of *effectiveness* and not of *strength,* for the quality of an instrument is not measured by the power it can put forth but by the accuracy with which its mechanism is adapted to function. What sense would there be in saying, of a watch, a fertilizer, a pair of scales, that they are strong? They are respectively accurate, fertile, or exact. It is only when the function of an instrument is to exert a certain energy, as, for example, when it must pull, lift, or grind, that it becomes legitimate to count strength among its essential properties. But even in this case, the best instrument is not always the one with the greatest strength: to wind a bobbin, one does not use a locomotive.

As soon as the question of the effectiveness of political regimes is put in these clear terms—what regime is the best adjusted to its objective—it becomes obvious that one can-

not reply until the objective is stated precisely. Does the regime propose to standardize minds and sow terror? For such purposes of oppression, no one will dispute that the prize goes to the totalitarian systems. Does the regime, on the contrary, propose to safeguard peace, to further well-being, to cultivate liberty? For these humanitarian goals, one cannot for a single moment compare the effectiveness of the totalitarian system to that of the democratic system.

It is therefore only a popular sophism that is concealed in the heart of the debate. If dictatorship can so conspicuously parade its strength, it is because, unlike democracy, it takes force as its main goal. It is not because it is strong that it goes off to war; the truth is, people believe it strong because it goes to war. But as soon as democracy takes upon itself the task of creating the machinery of strength, as it is obliged to do when it is attacked, it shows itself, as in other enterprises, more effective than its rival, and hence stronger in the legitimate sense of the word. If one believes the contrary, it is because dictatorships are continually working toward aggression. Thus they can take the democracies by surprise with an avalanche of soldiers, tanks, and planes, and win spectacular successes that dazzle the world and repeatedly arouse a chorus of self-criticism among democrats. "You see," the democrats say, "all we have with which to oppose barbarian vigor is decadent civilization; it is impossible to resist the totalitarian machine unless we employ totalitarian methods." Then these same democrats stiffen their resistance, reinforce their military strength in record time—without surrendering their basic principles—and win the decisive battles. Whereupon democracy demobilizes, goes back to the movies, a new totalitarian regime starts to forge cannon again, and the distressed democrats resume their lamentations over the "congenital" weakness of democracy.

Just because it is not true that democracy fatally weakens the social structure, one must not, of course, conclude that it is invincible. The fact that—contrary to the assertions of hostile or disgruntled critics—democracy does not lack the necessary resiliency to conquer totalitarianism, even in a test of strength, does not imply that it will always be victorious and that it can therefore idly await the ultimate battle. For if democracy permits too much leeway in the initial preparations, it may not recover from the very first battle. If, under pretext of a bleating liberalism, it does not react to the sabotage that the agents of totalitarianism carry on in its bosom, and which tends to corrupt its vigor, its springs may turn out to be rusty at the crucial moment. David can conquer Goliath, but on condition that he keep his sling ready and his eye alert—otherwise he would no longer be David. This condition, which is essential in order not to lose the war, is equally essential in order to preserve peace; and democracy, whose chief concern is man, is much more interested in peace than is dictatorship.

5

Do politics and party quarrels in the democracies weaken the general interest?

With their typical incoherence, the totalitarians, those frantic political agitators, accuse democracy of sacrificing the general interest to party interest and of cultivating in its citizens a pernicious passion for politics. They deafen us with slurs against the electoral system, which, they say, degrades the person elected into a servile courtier; against the parliamentary system, where, they claim, only the unscrupulous and the incompetent succeed; against the cabinet system, which they hold responsible for social disorders; against hidden feudalism, secret societies, political parties, and labor unions, which, they assert, form so many states within the state.

Politicking, for the totalitarians, is the great cesspool into which they throw, pell-mell, the many complaints, just or unjust, that free public life inspires in them. Is a particular democratic politician a fool? This is a disgrace, and proves that democracy chooses incompetents. Is he clever? This is a disgrace, and proves that democracy makes fools of the people. Is he popular? This is a disgrace, and proves that democracy flatters the masses. Is he unknown? This is a disgrace, and proves that democracy favors schemers.

What is the key to all this nonsense? The word "politics," because it implies freedom of opinion, and freedom of opinion implies disagreement, and disagreement must mean disapproval of dictatorship. Democrats need only observe calmly the opponents of free discussion to see that when such opponents protest against the multiplicity of political currents it is because such multiplicity thwarts their plan to subject everything to a single policy—their own; that when they shout "no parties," they mean no parties other than their own. But since politicophobia touches the very root of the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, and finds its widest audience in abused public opinion, it is important to examine the criticisms themselves before returning to the hatred that animates them.

THE ELECTORAL SWAMP

As soon as the privileged classes see themselves dethroned by the lowly, they begin to jeer at elections. This is a natural reaction on the part of the deposed rulers, who want to disqualify their successors—those insignificant people who have the impudence to demand the august exercise of sovereignty. And since it is easier to attack men than ideas, the privileged group ridicules those who cast the votes rather than contest the principle of the vote. All we have to do is to run through their traditional satire of the electoral system to observe the key adjectives "shabby" and "sordid" used to typify interests of simple voters. Furthermore, the fact that reactionaries indulge in this sort of sarcasm with such delight proves, better than any analysis, their profound scorn for the people they claim to regard so highly. For to anyone who sincerely loves the people, it is odious to discredit the elective principle on

the basis of the "naïveté" of the electors, especially so because, insofar as any naïveté may exist, it is maintained by those very persons who scoff at it and yet continue to nurture its sources: ignorance and poverty.

When it is not the voters the totalitarians attack, it is their elected representatives, those "agitators who buy and sell blocks of votes in the corridors." "If they visit the farm belt," say the totalitarians, "they delightedly drink in the odor of the manure pile and promise they will increase the price of wheat; if they go to industrial areas, they get worked up over baseball scores and guarantee they will lower the cost of bread; to shopkeepers they promise lower rents; to landlords, higher; to borrowers they promise to forgive debts, and to lenders, to support the interest rate; to young men of draft age they preach peace, and to the manufacturers, armaments. They certainly must have ideas, whether good or bad, on the fair price of bread and the likelihood of peace. It is cheating for those who seek votes to misrepresent their personal convictions in order to be elected."

In transferring the satire of the electoral system from the voters to their representatives, the totalitarians show themselves to be more clever than the *ci-devant* aristocrats; they thus discredit, because of its manifestations, a system they claim to approve in principle. Furthermore, they hit two birds with the same stone: on one hand they flatter the holders of those precious votes they covet, and on the other they defame their rivals, who for the moment have won those votes. The second of these devices, which aims at stirring up our anger at those we have elected, exploits a very common feeling: the underlying jealousy we feel toward those we have honored. Our congressman would be a nobody except for our votes, but because of our votes he amounts to something, while we remain nobodies. Of course, he will be back two years from now and

be polite to us again, but meantime we must doff our hats to him. So let's insult him now, the more so because he is under obligation to us and won't risk answering back.

As for the first device, making the people believe it is not they but their representatives who are being attacked—that is really a little thick; for if all representatives have always been charlatans (until the day we dream of, when we ourselves are elected to Congress), how can we escape the conclusion that all voters have always been fools? If those who seek the people's votes are nothing but scavengers, how can we avoid concluding that people's votes are all found in garbage cans? If the candidates who get elected by flattering the illusions and interests of the masses are vulgar and sordid, we must admit that the illusions of the masses are vulgar and their interests sordid: rascally representatives, elected by rascally voters. Whether or not we like it, the totalitarian's scorn for politicians matches the aristocrat's scorn for the people.

In emphasizing those criticisms of the electoral system that are exaggerated, we have no intention of ignoring those that are well founded. But to judge an accused person fairly we must take into account his individual situation. Now, the situation of representatives in democratic countries is much more complicated than in dictatorships. The sovereignty of a people is quite different from that of a despot. The will of a prince, even a capricious one, is at least single and manifest at all times, so that to serve his will one need only provide oneself with a pad and pencil. The will of the people, on the contrary, has many forms, and to harmonize its innumerable interests requires a complex political system. Its needs and aspirations form a confused sediment from which directives must be filtered out. This task, which has no equivalent in a dictatorship, involves so much initiative and conjecture that the poli-

tician with this burden is led to combine the roles of guide and representative. That is what makes for the difficulty—but also the nobility—of his office; whereas across the way, in the offices of the dictator, the prefabricated representative from a predestined list performs the easy functions of a clerk or a supernumerary. On one side we have a political man; on the other, a straw man.

It can readily be seen that the democratic candidate, torn between political leadership of his constituents (in his role as guide) and devotion to their interests (in his role as representative), in this ticklish mixture sacrifices the least popular ingredient—his leadership. Thus he will let himself float like a cork, at the mercy of all the desires of the voters. This temptation is obviously stronger in a democracy than in a dictatorship, and explains the element of truth in the totalitarian criticism.

It explains it. But it does not justify the opposite practice, peculiar to totalitarians, of posing before the voters as a mighty seer who, whip in one hand and horoscope in the other, declares: "I am kind enough to enlighten you about the path to salvation; either you follow me or I shall drag you by force." If the democrat flatters the self-interest of the masses, the totalitarian tramples upon their independence; if the democrat errs on the side of irresponsibility, the totalitarian indulges in inhumanity. The solution lies neither in handing over power to the masses nor in bowing down to a despot. It lies in a balance between two equally necessary autonomies: that of the people, who express their desires and control their representatives; and that of their representatives, who heed but also advise them. As with all enterprises that take upon themselves the settlement of difficult tasks and complex problems, this delicate balance is constantly threatened. This danger can be avoided only by a Pharaonic system in

which a permanent despot arbitrarily rules subjects who have been reduced to the state of inanimate objects. If there are sins that dictatorship does not commit, it is not through virtue but through congenital deficiency; a eunuch should not boast of resisting the temptations of the flesh. A deputy obviously will not face the temptation of courting the favor of the voters except in countries where the citizens have freedom of choice.

Reduced to their proper proportions, the abuses of the electoral system do not appear as vices inherent in the democratic way of life but as a result of human weakness in face of the particular difficulties of this way of life. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that the flattery of voters is not peculiar to politics, as the antiliberals would like us to believe, but is manifested in all fields in which there is free choice. If, for example, we compare parliamentary debates with business discussions or with advertisers' claims, we see that it is in the former that the individual is less flattered, that truth is more respected, that more intelligent ideas prevail, and that more dignified behavior is observed. To be sure, political platforms do not have the profundity and objectivity of sociological analyses, but neither do they promise the moon, as our advertisers sometimes do. They are careful to avoid the notorious excesses of the demagogues, which their alert rivals would be quick to turn against them.

That flattery of the voters is not limited to politics is proved by many examples. Everyone is familiar with the assiduous way in which candidates for the French Academy curry favor with the Forty Immortals. They compliment their wives, gush over their children, praise their tastes, and quote their works with enthusiasm, even if they think wife, children, tastes, and works are distasteful. Yet

the candidate for the Academy is generally a more cultivated man than the candidate for parliament. He uses flattery the more readily because he uses it secretly. In the drawing room where he pays the academician exaggerated compliments on his latest novel, the walls conceal no ears connected with ten thousand newspapers that might disclose that in other company he called this novel a flop. But the candidate for office must conduct his campaign in public; therefore his insincerity would be discovered quickly. Once a politician departs from his announced platform in order to win the favor of those holding divergent opinions, his opponents—and even his followers—promptly charge that he is merely an unprincipled opportunist, a turncoat.

It is democracy that furnishes the only effective parry to demagogy, for the surest way to restrain a candidate from flattering the crowd is to have other rival candidates free to expose him. This again proves that the chief virtue of democracy lies in the faculty of self-correction, totally lacking in totalitarianism.

We have been willing to acknowledge that some aspects of the totalitarians' criticism of the electoral system are well founded, but it is also important to emphasize that some are not valid. For with this excessive severity toward the moderate demagogy that afflicts universal suffrage, the totalitarians themselves employ the most brazen demagogy: that of making the people believe they will be more faithfully represented by a dictator who does not consult them than by deputies who consult them too much. Actually, the only countries in which the degradation of the voters by their representatives is complete are those with a totalitarian system of government. It is only in these regimes that candidates can make their audiences swallow

any story, and that one can see whole masses of voters led by their representatives to believe that all Jews starve the people and that all working women in capitalist countries prostitute themselves to their employers. Besides such extravagances, how moderate the illusions implanted in the voters by democratic demagogues! As for myself, I have never heard any of them promise, as the robots of the totalitarian party do, that they will establish paradise on earth the next day; instead, I have often listened to candidates who spoke honestly and urged their listeners to understand the situation and to reduce their demands accordingly.

Where would the popular conscience be, over which our totalitarian friends seem to watch so zealously, if there had never been popular elections? Although many democratic pronouncements are distressing in their stupidity, how often, in campaign rallies, have we not witnessed the exciting groping of obscure individuals toward a little light? On the platform some future cabinet minister, wearing a halo of power, is orating, and in the hall the eternal taxpayers, weatherbeaten and nameless, are trying to follow him. Then one of them offers a simple objection, and suddenly power passes from the platform to the hall, and the speaker must ask the citizen to give it back. So started the promise of a world in which the one who has power must satisfy the one who carries the load—a promise whose grandeur no totalitarian brain will ever comprehend.

Of course, the promise is not entirely fulfilled, for the objection is awkward, the reply equivocal, and the whole is far from scientific. But they already are far from the ignorance of public affairs in which people were only two centuries ago. The politician succeeds in eluding the promise only by giving a pledge to the confused will throb-

bing in the humble. Besides, he can't cheat too much, for his opponent is in the hall—another politician who knows the tricks of the trade just as well and who is just as eager to be elected. Thus what comes out in the end is neither pure truth nor pure lie; it is a complex mixture of avowals and loopholes, of sincerity and sophism, as it must always be when the thick soup of humanity is simmering.

Basically, what worries the totalitarians secretly, in contrast to what they say, is that democratic elections may contain too many, and not too few, opportunities for the people to come close to the truth and expose demagogy. It is the totalitarians who sound off with endless lies; it is they who go in for unbridled excesses, extraordinary promises, and messianic pronouncements. It is they who, invoking the sectarian severity of principles, now advocating the most abject abandonment of them, now stirring up the most altruistic emotions, now speculating on the most cynical calculations, and, as far as possible, playing all these tunes at once—are the inveterate flatterers of popular passions.

They cannot even plead the excuse of the democratic atmosphere, for once democracy is strangled, it is the dictator they must flatter, and this is far worse. Instead of having to pretend enthusiasm every four years, they must lick the same pair of boots every day. If the totalitarian feels less humiliation in pledging his faith to a master than to a people, it is because he had the confirmed soul of a vassal who can see no greatness except in the tangible power of an overlord and who does not appreciate the abstract nobility of public service. But it is obvious to anyone with the slightest dignity that if it is not very glorious to pay court to the masses, it is much less so to pay court to Caesar.

OPPORTUNISM AND OCCULT FEUDALISM

It is not only at campaign meetings but also in the legislative halls that the snarling totalitarians pursue the democratic politician. This monster, they say, has disguised his convictions in order to catch votes, and now he renounces them to fish for a higher office. Here again it would be foolish to deny the existence of the evil, but we must measure its extent from the sociological rather than the moral point of view—that is, not by listing all the little twists politicians give their ideas to push themselves to the front but by estimating what portion of public life is, in the long run, derived not from the publicly announced political program but from the secret ambitions of the official. Stating the problem in these terms again leads to the conclusion that this portion is smaller in a democracy. In the U.S.S.R. it is 100 per cent, since there is not one of the rights theoretically granted the workers by that program of programs, the Russian constitution, that is not, in practice, taken away from them by that ambition of ambitions, the Russian dictatorship.

There is more to this. In a democracy, running for important offices is not, in principle, contradictory to the pursuit of valid personal political ambition. In a totalitarian regime, on the contrary, since nothing is ever achieved except by the will of the supreme leader, the intrigue for the crumbs of power demands a total surrender of conscience on the part of the politicians. In a democracy, an ambitious person must have respect for the opinions of others; in a dictatorship, for the whims of others. In a democracy, what he covets is, after all, political responsibility; in a dictatorship, he covets a whip. In fact, in a totalitarian regime he no longer wins a position, he begs for it; he doesn't push himself forward, he kneels.

So it is true that dictatorship does away with opportunism —it replaces it with crawling.

Public opinion must have a short memory to have forgotten that this degradation of politics to intrigue was considered for centuries, by all enlightened minds, as the congenital vice of absolutism. Has it forgotten that to relieve society of it, our ancestors overthrew the old regime? For the only remedy lay precisely in transferring the rivalries from the palace to the rostrum, from the boudoir to the press. It is only by permitting the greatest number of competitors and the greatest amount of light on their rivalries that we can purify men's inevitable struggle for political influence. But instead of congratulating democracy for having reduced the virulence of intrigues as old as the world, by forcing them out of their gloomy hiding places, the crowd thinks these intrigues were born the day it first became aware of them. It thinks, as a child does, that opening its eyes brings on the danger, whereas this is the only way to deal with it.

Modern democracy is not only the first regime in history to succeed in restraining opportunism by forcing it to use less brutal weapons than poison and poniards, but it is democracy that has won acceptance for the concept of *public service* completely apart from personal aims.

The idea that politics must be a purely altruistic activity is not self-evident, for in ordinary occupations ambition is in no way considered a disqualifying factor. For centuries it has been thought perfectly permissible for a man to seek honor and fortune in the profession of politics, just as in any other. Even in the nineteenth century, Stendhal could win sympathy for a fictional hero, Lucien Leuwen, who, to advance his fortune, served a reactionary policy that he condemned and a stupid minister whom he scorned. Such young men still exist, to be sure, but it

would be difficult now for a writer to make such a character sympathetic to his readers, for the idea has been so strongly implanted that politics is a genuine responsibility and a vocation rather than a mere profession. This is a new phenomenon in history and is due essentially to the advent of democracy.

The denunciation of the secret cliques that politicians are reputed to form among themselves in order better to divide the spoils is another form of the campaign carried on by the totalitarians to discredit democratic political life. It finds an echo in public opinion all the more readily because it reinforces the idea that we never see anything but a deceptive aspect of political life, a masquerade staged by shadowy personalities who pull the strings while the real game is played in the wings by the cliques, the churches, the Masonic lodges. The remarkable success of this idea lies in the fact that it allows men who are incapable of controlling their own passions or governing their own institutions to evade their responsibility by imputing all political evil to sorcery. Thus, anything distressing that happens will never be what they wanted or weakly allowed to occur, but what these sorcerers presumably plotted.

There is no financial, technical, or cultural circle in which men do not form more or less closed groups to help one another in the undignified contest for dignified position. But we have seen that modern opinion—under the influence of democratic ideals—does not tend to consider politics to be like other professions: it demands that the avenues of politics be straight and wide open for all to see. It is the fixation of progressive minds on an ideal of open political life that the totalitarian groups—those secret societies par excellence—exploit in order to stir up the citizens against the supposed power of secret societies in democratic regimes.

The public is mistaken in believing that significant events come from invisible sources. Among the peculiar features of the last war was the unprecedented opportunity to examine confidential documents discovered in the archives of defeated dictatorships. It is quite remarkable that none of these texts ever revealed anything essentially different from the news that an informed observer could have obtained by reading the press communiques; and this was very disappointing to those who are always looking for the hand in the dark that strikes the blows of history.

I am willing to admit that influences unknown to the public may play a part in the decisions of democratic governments, but whatever the real incidence of underhand maneuvers, one thing is certain: the best way to reduce them is to allow the politicial opposition to speak out. When freedom of expression is assured to a multitude of journalists, pamphleteers, parties, labor unions, and associations of all sorts, there is much less chance for a secret group to acquire an exclusive influence over the state. On the other hand, nothing encourages the flourishing of cabals so much as personal power. In a democracy an ambitious and talented politician can try his luck by attempting to gain a following by the discussion of ideas, but in an autocratic regime he has no recourse other than a palace conspiracy.

THE PARTY SWAMP

"Discussion of ideas!" the totalitarians will exclaim. "Where do you see any ideas in the croaking that comes out of the party swamp?"

As everyone knows, totalitarians are very subtle when it comes to ideas. Observe their attacks, listen to their slo-

gans, feel their cudgels. They are the ones who subject ideas to the most outrageous degradation by reducing them to a pitiful skeleton of war cries. But once they have reduced discussion to parrotlike repetition, and thought to regulations, these scorners of parties extend their own party to unprecedented limits. Scarcely have these despisers of politics assumed power than they introduce politics into the least important administrative machinery, into the most innocent places: schoolrooms, athletic fields, museums, amusement parks. Sciences and consciences alike are crammed full of their political litanies; their officeholders cannot obtain position without belonging to their party; their subjects are persecuted unless they attend their meetings; fishermen, teen-age girls, retarded children, stamp collectors are regimented in auxiliary organizations, where a few party members see to it that they adhere to the party line. Was it not Dr. Ley who declared: "The Nazi party must form the framework of the life of citizens of all classes and occupations, including each house and each family." [1] Those democrats who listen to the totalitarian deprecation of their parties should first consider the hideous monster that would be set up in their stead.

"We are not so much opposed to the idea of parties as to the multiplicity of parties," the totalitarians will come back at us, "to those free-for-all discussions that hold up decisions, which should be prompt and conclusive, by endless debates and inglorious compromises. We are for the party and for the policy of the ideal." But how are we to define or discover the ideal? There are many opinions about its meaning, and a different policy springs from each opinion. Is it the love of humanity that constitutes the supreme criterion or the love of a single country? Does good lie in indulgence or severity? In unanimity or diversity? In obedience or independence? In the power of the

nation or the well-being of its citizens? Everyone who reflects impartially on these questions will recognize how difficult it is to leave the solution to a single doctrine or, still more, to a single authority.

We might at least hope that the single-party system, by avoiding the waste of propaganda that any competition inevitably involves, would be less onerous for the nation than a plethora of parties. But such is not the case. In commerce, the fewer the brands of soap, the less the advertising costs; in politics, conversely, the fewer the parties, the higher the cost of winning followers. In fact, the parties that devote most money to praising themselves are not those that have to face competition but those that boast of no longer having any opponent. This is because they have stifled the voice of the opposition; but its spirit, they know perfectly well, continues to survive in everyone's soul. Although they have destroyed half a dozen official parties, they have caused a hundred million private ones to spring up, for every citizen has begun to hide a party of his own in the depths of his heart. It is with these parties that the ten thousand mouths of official editorial writers and the millions of state propagandists will argue until they are blue in the face. The unanimity that dictatorship claims as its strength is not armor; it is a Penelope's web that the state laboriously weaves day by day, only to have the silent citizens unravel it every night.

We repudiate the totalitarian subterfuge that consists in evading objections by attacking the objectors, so we cannot be content with establishing the fact that the monolithic parties of dictatorship have an immeasurably greater fossilizing effect than the multiple parties of democracy. We must recognize that the latter (like the totalitarians) display a tendency to become ends in themselves instead

of remaining the instruments of an ideal. Let us estimate the evil carefully.

Everyone will grant that it is not physically possible to govern fifty or a hundred million men without intermediary echelons. Political problems become more and more complex, the solutions more and more uncertain, the interests and appetites of the public more and more awakened, and, as a result, the divergences more and more inevitable. It is only by grouping the voices that are singing more or less in unison that we can make out a few intelligible chords in this cacophony. This is the reason for parties, for labor unions, for organizations of all sorts, and it must be admitted that without these preliminary coalitions and these continuing discussion centers, quadrennial elections would soon turn into totalitarian plebiscites. Nor is it strange that the performers in each concert become infatuated with their own music. It is human to choose one's companions and to show a certain preference for the group one has chosen, for very few men have the ability to keep themselves in a state of perfect receptivity to all the winds of the universe. What we are justified in requiring of the man who has chosen a party is that he not carry his preference to the point of being blind to serious mistakes, and that he remain ready to leave his group if it becomes a prison.

It is revealing that the totalitarians, in their imprecations against politicking, never openly attack the democratic *principle* itself. They jeer at the candidates seeking election and at the elections held to ascertain the will of the public, but they fail to say there should be no more elections, although that is their dearest wish. Now, as soon as we recognize that the governed have the right to express an opinion, then candidates, parliaments, ministers, parties, labor unions become inevitable for the simple reason that

ten thousand people with ideas cannot bring them to the attention of a hundred million others unless they group themselves together. Nor can the hundred million influence the political agents who control their fate unless they delegate the legislative power to representatives. If only from this simple technical standpoint, this is an inescapable imperative, and no one has yet invented a better system.

The failures of the democratic system—inevitable, as in any human endeavor—are derived much more from faults in practice than from vices in principle. Parties, unions, parliaments may anaesthetize political consciences, mislead or dishonor them, but they may also awaken them, dignify them, and nourish them with the substance of purified consciences. Love may likewise debase as well as ennoble; it behooves men not to abstain from loving but to learn to love well. In the same way, they must not abstain from politics but learn how to have clean politics and how, patiently, to purify the institutions indispensable to the existence of free societies. This is perhaps an obscure role, but it is not without greatness for those who know that the most decisive part in the human adventure often lies in small details.

THE EMOTIONAL ROOTS OF THE SCORN OF POLITICS

Most men, and more especially totalitarians, because of their arrogance, tend to think their own opinions are true and honest and have a suprapartisan nobility. In contrary opinions they see manifestations of bad faith and self-interest, which they refer to as "vile politics." When they stigmatize democrats engaged in "base party rivalries," it is not only hypocritically to impose their own formulas to the exclusion of any others; it is also because they feel un-

comfortable before the flowering of diverse theories and the repeated inducement for voters to form opinions of their own.

Totalitarians, unable to let ideas determine their conduct, are convinced that democrats are equally unable to do so and that they talk about principles merely to put their opponents off the track. "They are no more intelligent than we are," the totalitarians think. "They aim, as we do, at seizing power and wealth; if they conceal their designs behind the smoke screen of big words and pose as ideologists, it is to show their contempt of us. But you can't make us believe that people will sacrifice themselves for ideas, for we know that only the whip or money will make men act. Democracies, too, must have leaders who give orders and collect graft. By stripping off their masks we bring them back into the common jungle, where we shall prove the stronger, for we are kings of the beasts." Behind any ideology they suspect ringleaders, tricks, interests—in short, the only realities in their own experience and within their comprehension. Campaigns against politics allow the crude to take revenge on the intelligent; that is what explains their enormous success.

Since it is natural to disparage what you don't have and to extol what you do have, totalitarians scorn ideas and praise fists. When they are occasionally obliged to work on the level of ideas, they prefer to deal with strong-arm ideas. Their logic, their rhetoric, and their dialectic are summed up in this rule: In discussions, never defend yourself; always attack. It is by applying this military tactic that totalitarians retort to criticisms by abuse. The only dialogues they are familiar with are of the following sort. The democrat: "How do you account for the fact that a party that, in its statutes, extols the emancipation of the workers, sends twenty million of them to labor

camps?" The Communist: "That's a fine thing to ask me, you who vote subsidies for parochial schools." The democrat, falling into the trap: "I beg your pardon, I didn't vote for or against; I abstained." The Communist: "Coward, enemy of the people, oppressor, you've sold yourself! How much did they give you to get us into a war with the Soviet Union?" It can readily be imagined that by comparison with this model, the references to doctrines and texts, the quibbling over facts that constitute democratic debates seem to totalitarians like the exasperating procrastination of incompetents or the disloyal pretense of schemers.

But even this model of strong-arm ideas is still too decadent for most totalitarians, who quickly pass to the really pure model of strong-arm methods. For if their propaganda can dam the steadily growing flood of objections, it can dry it up only by the annihilation of the objectors. Enough of intellectual fighting, even when reduced to the most rudimentary tactics; to the stake with the opponent!

Totalitarians fail to understand that it is possible for a man to hold opinions, for example, about books or pictures, at a certain period in his life, and to change these opinions later. For them, opinion is an integral part of the body, as the eyes and nose are of the face. Just as one must live, observe, and die with his eyes, no matter how infected they may become, so one must live, discourse, and die with one's doctrine, no matter how incoherent it may eventually become. A totalitarian accepts his opinion as Cyrano did his nose: the more repulsive it is, the less he brooks criticism of it. It is this necessity to dig himself into his hole with the few fixed ideas that form his whole philosophy that impels him to hate politicians, those grotesque creatures who pry into everything and catch him in his doctrinal nakedness.

Let us remember that political life, which requires the elaboration of doctrines, the adoption of strategic formulas, the integration of criticism, is a very recent creation. Before 1789, politics meant the august intrigues of the aristocrats; the administration of the country was entrusted to obscure employees of the prince. One of the first men who was given the task of forming a government in accordance with his own advocated plan of social action was Necker, on the eve of the French Revolution. What offended so many conservatives of the period in Rousseau's *Social Contract* was his idea of founding the government upon a rational justification and not upon hereditary superstitions. The tradition of the divine right of kings, which had been perpetuated for thousands of years, was wiped out no more than a century and a half ago—and at that in a fragmentary way, for intermittent periods, and only in certain countries. It is not surprising, then, that many minds are not ready to accept political criticism as one of the normal activities of life; that so many uneducated and timid creatures, at the bottom of their hearts, think that the mere act of questioning the principles of the government is a satanic sin. In their eyes, those who commit this sin can be nothing but vile loafers, envious of the power legitimately exercised by the great.

If the totalitarians consider intellectual divergences as a work of Satan, it is because they think that power based on the intellect is diabolical, whereas that based on force is divine. Basically, this point of view is merely another manifestation of their deep misanthropy, for it is intellect that distinguishes man from animal, and this is what, in man, disturbs the totalitarian. He praises man's muscles, his instincts, his physical courage, but he hates his thought, his culture, his moral resistance. "Fascism means war on intelligence," wrote Gentile.[2]

Among the decrees of the thirty tyrants who reigned in Athens by the grace of Sparta there was one statute that expressly prohibited teaching "the art of words." How characteristic of totalitarianism this prohibition is! The art of words! Men were nobly killing each other well before they invented language, this decadence that puts the crafty person on equal terms with the gallant one. The art of words! This is indeed that recourse of the weak detested by Lycurgus. Wrestling, jousting, war—here is the world of honor and simplicity; for whereas a speech is full of snares, the meaning of combat is clear: on one side the victor, on the other the corpse. Moreover, it was not so long ago that one resorted to dueling to settle wrongs, that the degree of a prisoner's guilt was measured by the degree of his resistance to torture. But the art of words is protean, underhanded—an ironical intonation, a biting allusion, a mention of a simple rule of logic, a glimpse of a point of view the totalitarian thought he had obliterated, and, behold, the victor robbed of his triumph, behold his laurels faded, behold Goliath slain by David! Whether it hides in the syllogisms of Aristotle, in the volumes of the *Encyclopedia,* or in the contradiction of an opponent, the word gnaws at the foundation of the sacred edifice of brute power. That is one of the reasons for the bitter grudge totalitarians hold against politics.

Neither do they like the fact that discussion can lessen social conflicts, for they would like to preserve the original character of the relations between men, to have men conduct themselves according to the blood that runs in their veins, to have the strongest win. But the politicians come along with their speeches and invoke programs, quote statistics, establish comparisons, get lost in commas, and finally, in the haze of their ratiocinations, blur the very

outlines of the hostile groups that the totalitarians like to see clear and distinct.

It is, therefore, not because it hinders progress but, on the contrary, because it stimulates it by provoking a sublimation of elementary and instinctive conflicts that the totalitarians curse politics. Marxism joins the totalitarians on this point, for, by declaring that only the economic foundation matters, it contributes to the depreciation of political thought and the appreciation of the brute in man.

Totalitarianism, therefore, is a system that allows the timorous to spare themselves the bother of reflection, to elude responsibilities, and to evade the distressing ordeal of choice. The state, rather than the citizen, decides. Still better, the state assures the citizen in advance that its decision will be perfect, and it asks him nothing in return but to applaud its decision. And the totalitarian, adding to the intoxication that certainty always affords a simple soul the relief that obedience always gives a servile soul, will hail it. He will hail not only what has been decided but also the decisions to come, and, shouting bravos, he will make a sacrifice of his obscure personality on the altar of obscurantism.

Of course, the day will come when the totalitarian devil to whom he has sold his soul (about which he cares little) will suck his marrow (about which he cares a great deal), and then, however docile he may have been at the beginning, he will no longer hail the decisions. But then it will be too late. He will have learned at his expense—but, alas, at ours, too—that Lucifer never seizes souls just to take care of the bodies, but to torment both at once.

The anti-intellectual reflexes of the people, one might think, would be weakened as social dangers diminish and knowledge increases. But far from being dissipated, the dreams of a Utopian world become more intense as the

real world improves. Antirationalism springs up again no longer from fear but from desire, since the social heaven that man is trying to reach recedes as he advances to touch it. This is not *a priori* an unhealthy symptom, for it is good that man does not accept the status quo as it is and wishes to perfect it. The tragedy is that his desires are always a century ahead of his potentialities, while his ethics are ten centuries behind. Man aspires to international socialism—which implies great wealth and a liberal state of mind—while his production is still incapable of furnishing the minimum vital for half of humanity and he himself behaves as a petty tyrant to all his kindred that he can dominate. The greatest revolution in human development, comparable in importance to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, was that introduced by agriculture. But just as it took thousands of years for the mentality of the nomad hunter to be transformed into that of a farmer, it is to be feared that it will take long centuries for the mentality appropriate for our era to become part of our instincts. From the ideological standpoint, the majority of the democrats are still at the agrarian stage; the totalitarians have not yet passed the cynegetic.

6

Do transcendent causes justify the sacrifice of freedom?

When the totalitarians are compelled by the course of history to accept the development of political life, they struggle to curb it, either directly (as we have seen), by subjecting it to calumny, or indirectly, by demanding that parties forget their animosities and unite in a fervent common front for the exclusive service of a higher Cause—the modern counterpart of the service of the king. Their goal is always to force the citizen back into the ranks and to silence him. But since a simple command is no longer obeyed by a man with sufficient pride to hold a personal opinion on public questions, the totalitarians explain that he must sacrifice his convictions to a sublime ideal. They urge him to lose his identity in a sacred union behind some Attila disguised as Caesar: they thrust him back into personal insignificance by saddling him with the heavy monument of Nation or History. And thus political life, which should be placed at the service of living men, is transformed into liturgical life, at the service of a transcendent cause.

IN THE SERVICE OF THE NATION

For thousands of years moralists as well as captains, bourgeois and bards, proverbs and songs, have all taught that the Fatherland is the supreme good, that it alone is worthy of our fullest devotion, that "to die for one's country is the noblest of fates, and the one most to be envied." How, then, can citizens remain unmoved by slogans such as those that form the alpha and omega of all authoritarian declarations: "I recognize no parties, I know only France." Or: "Private enterprise and economic planning are merely propaganda labels. The only doctrine that counts is the national interest." (One wonders how an interest can be a doctrine, but I have copied this sentence word for word from the statement of principles of a "national" candidate in the French legislative elections of 1951.) Or, finally: "My country, right or wrong"; "What is error on one side of the border is truth on the other," an old saying that the totalitarians would offer us as an ideal. By such standards it would follow that the Ems dispatch is true if read in Paris and false if read in Berlin, or that a negotiator who defends the interests of a country is just if the country is your own but infamous if it is the country across the border.

Thanks to such slogans, dictatorship—its progress unopposed because critical faculties have been paralyzed—for centuries has found an open path to the hearts of the people. It is these slogans that make so many democratic people susceptible to totalitarian propaganda, that predispose them to lend active support—or at least to remain silent—while their liberties are suppressed for the greater glory of the National Idol. Nationalism is the principal dogma that democrats have in common with totalitarians, but it always works in favor of the latter because, by its

very nature, it tends to fuse those diversities that the democrat is in duty bound to protect, giving rise in its place to that mystical unity so beloved by regimes based on power.

THE HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES OF NATIONALISM

Many stirring deeds no doubt have been performed in the name of the Fatherland, but the Fatherland has also been used as justification for all the onslaughts of totalitarianism that have cast a pall upon the world. The appeal to national glory was the *leitmotiv* used by Hitler and Mussolini to whip their followers into a frenzy; by comparison, the rest of their propaganda was so insignificant that it is quite correct to consider totalitarianism as no more than an outgrowth of nationalism. In Stalin's system, the merging of the two doctrines occurred at a later stage, but since then the cohesion of the Soviet state, insofar as it does not depend entirely upon the unifying force of the police, has been based much more upon Russian patriotic fervor than upon Marxism. Whether in America, Europe, Africa, or Malaysia, as soon as advocates arise to plead the cause of blind discipline, the gagging of opponents, or intransigent isolationism—in short, as soon as a fascist tendency comes to light—we can predict that the apologists of such a program will claim they are the defenders of the national interest, shocked by the grave harm inflicted upon the country by political bickering.

The fact that the national interest can be invoked so successfully to justify the endlessly renewed attack against ideological discussion, and consequently against public enlightenment, should have aroused the apprehension of democrats long ago and made them question the taboo of nationalism as well as that of absolute power. Those who are impressed when the apologists of tyranny call for the

sacrifice of "mean and petty interests" upon the altar of the Nation should understand that the only valid meaning of national greatness is in the welfare of the greatest possible number of citizens. Though we may agree that this welfare is not to be measured by the amount of political patronage doled out by party chieftains, we must recognize, on the other hand, that it can truly be served only through those legislative committees and debates, those interchanges between voters and their representatives, that are so ridiculed by the admirers of sheer force.

Even the more moderate worship of the Nation professed by democrats cannot fail to strengthen national intransigence, and this tendency must, of necessity, foster armed conflict among nations. Each country covers a certain area of the earth's surface; since the earth's surface is limited, one cannot make one's highest goal the extension of any one country without in some way threatening the other parts. Thus, the worship of the Nation inevitably has war as its sequel, whatever the intentions of its advocates may be.

It has often been proved that freedom cannot flourish in the midst of general poverty. Nations, however, by isolating themselves behind tariff barriers, stifle development of their economies. Modern industry provides the means for mass production at low cost, but before its potential can be realized there must be heavy investments in productive equipment. Such expenses are economically feasible only when the cost can be spread over a large volume of production, a practice that, in turn, depends upon access to very wide markets. However, few nations created by historical chance possess such a market, nor do their present boundaries permit productive efficiency through logical geographical distribution of industries. The crystallization of national states thus condemns the economy to

stagnate at archaic and inefficient levels of development that block any substantial improvement in the living standards of the people, through which their freedom might be increased. To make national greatness the primary goal is thus to condemn to failure all major social and economic reforms.

We must recognize that these examples of the injurious effects of nationalism make no impression upon the minds of many people, who place the object of their devotion beyond the ordinary world; they believe that, above opinions and even above the general interest, there exists something sublime, the destiny of which is more important than the fate of men: the Nation. They believe the Nation springs from the womb of the people and stands for it as a collective being, and that this intrinsic characteristic exempts it from the need for any rational justification.

To free the minds of men from this magic spell, and democrats from this tribute to totalitarianism, we must divest the Nation of its sacred character by showing that it is not a mystical essence but a product of given circumstances.

WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE NATIONAL BOND?

Since most people, apart from hardened fascists, are fairly well rid of the false concept that national ties depend upon a common racial origin, we need give little attention to this view. One has only to open a history book to realize that in all countries, invasions, migrations, conquests, and colonizations have produced so many inextricable mixtures of population that nowhere has any stock been preserved intact. Of course, there are different human types. One is the Mediterranean, generally small, dark, and voluble, individualistic and devoted to the art of

living—an aesthetic and subjective type. Another is the Nordic, usually tall, blond, and reserved; he thinks more in social terms and imposes the control of ideas upon his feelings—the objective and civic-minded type. But both these types are found in many different countries, which nonetheless remain jealous of their autonomy; some countries, such as France, contain them in almost equal proportions, without harm to the national unity.

Nor does the existence of a common language explain national unity. The Greek city-states engaged in bitter warfare while all recited the same verses of Homer. In our own day, dozens of countries cherish their separate cultures, though using identical English or Spanish. Conversely, in others, such as Belgium, Switzerland, India, and Canada, the coexistence of different linguistic groups has not disrupted national cohesion.

The national bonds of race and language prove to be so insubstantial that a stronger tie is often sought: in historical traditions. We sometimes hear opinions such as the following expressed by those who support this view: "I have received from my ancestors a heritage they have preserved, embellished, and defended with their lives; I owe them all the joy it brings me, and the only way I can repay them is to preserve this patrimony, in order to pass it on intact, and, if possible, enriched, to my descendants. This material and spiritual treasure held in common constitutes the cornerstone of the Nation."

If this concept were true, it would reduce patriotism to the level of an heir's selfish interest in the family wealth. But the idea that the Nation is founded on a common heritage can no more bear scrutiny than the other theories we have examined. In reality, all countries that take pride in their cultures draw upon a single international cultural fund. All are indebted to Greece for philosophy, to the

Chaldeans for astronomy, to Rome for jurisprudence, to Germany for printing, to China for gunpowder and silk, to the Iberian peninsula for navigation and discovery of the New World, to the Arabs for algebra. Moreover, it is a questionable oversimplification to attribute any specific national origins to ideas and sciences. Since the complexity of modern civilization has made it impossible to point to any single person as the inventor of the radio, of the railroad, or of existentialism, who can know to which nation he is indebted for the invention or idea—if, indeed, the Nation rather than the inventor may claim the right to such recognition. If each country owed its prestige only to its share of the world fund of inventions and discoveries, the love it could inspire in its citizens would be extremely limited. In the case of small countries such as Paraguay, Luxembourg, and Estonia, such sentiment could scarcely exist at all, though these countries actually inspire it no less intensely than the others.

It is even more arbitrary to seek the national bond in the annals of those stirring exploits in which each Nation may take pride, for the same acts of military heroism, civic courage, personal abnegation, and creative will are noted on the rolls of honor of all countries. And on such a basis it would be impossible to explain why one particular selection of deeds should become the object of the admiration, love, and gratitude of one limited segment of mankind.

Moreover, if we seek to define the heritage upon which national feeling is alleged to be founded by the outstanding events of the country's history, why count only the brilliant achievements? Why not the humiliating memories: Agincourt, Waterloo, Trafaigar, Sedan, Cauchon, Landru, Stavisky? All events, good or bad, honorable or

mortifying, should enter the picture. But then the Nation's portrait loses its inspiring beauty.

Furthermore, patriots do not realize the dangerous consequences of speaking of the Nation as though it were a human being. For if the Nation may legitimately be personified, it must then be judged in its daily conduct in accordance with the moral code accepted in personal relationships. If we look objectively at the life of such a personified Nation, we are astounded that it could ever have been held up to the peoples of the world as a source of high inspiration. Anatole France observed that men are more scrupulous in games of chance than in public affairs, and that "they show more integrity in backgammon than in a battle or a treaty of peace." [1] Indeed, in backgammon among nations, the greatest cheat wins the most glory, and patriots—even those who in their private lives are logical and just—feel no shame in flaunting their selfishness, envy, and dishonesty when they identify themselves with the personified Nation. People would be shocked to hear a person state that he recognized no truth other than that of advancing his own interests, but they applaud such statements when they are made in the name of the Nation. Richelieu lies in the Pantheon of France, but if what he did on a national scale were considered in terms of personal conduct, one would see that he used all his energy and cunning to break agreements, slander enemies, bribe servants, and betray friends. Is there any type of man more despised than one who runs after a dowry? Yet this is exactly what has been done by most monarchs who are famous for the marriage portions their wives brought to the crown. What is more unpleasant than a braggart who boasts of his exploits at every opportunity? Patriots, however, think it very creditable when, with learned professors as spokesmen, Ireland publishes books proving that Homer was

Irish, or Germany claims Christ as an Aryan, or Russia states that motion pictures, aviation, and printing were invented by Mr. Popoff.

Since all these explanations for the cultural unity of nations are subject to criticism, at present cultural affinities are most likely to be cited—especially by democrats—as the basis for the national bond. The true national community, we are told, is the cultural community.

It should be understood clearly that we have explained nothing if we have merely established that people in a given nation know and quote the same authors, for this is a result and not a cause of national existence. The partisans of the "cultural bond" theory must prove that all the works produced within a given territory are the spontaneous result of the tremendous attachment of the inhabitants to this territory.

The existence of national cultural characteristics is usually regarded as too obvious to require proof. Nothing, however, should inspire more distrust than a general proposition unaccompanied by verifiable examples.

This was understood by the London Institute of Psychology, when, during the war, it engaged in empirical research to determine whether or not it was possible to identify national characteristics in humor. This conscientious institute printed a special collection of jokes by English, French, and German authors (all translated into impeccable English, without any visible reference to national origin) and submitted them to several thousand wounded men, of all social backgrounds, under hospital treatment. After having made the patients laugh, smile, or yawn, the investigators asked them to try to identify the nationality of the authors of these anecdotes. Without hesitation, the majority of these fine, patriotic Englishmen credited the cleverest ones to English humor, the broad

jokes to French wit, and the stories in bad taste to Germans. Even among the more perceptive subjects, who tried to use more pertinent criteria, 80 per cent of the answers were wrong. The test showed that both stupidity and subtlety are among the most widely shared characteristics. As an ironic commentary on the theory of racism, it turned out that German prisoners hospitalized in England were unable to distinguish between Jewish and Aryan jokes.

Once again, intuition was refuted by experience. Humor, popularly regarded as the most specifically national characteristic of each people's genius, was proved, rather, to be wholly individual.

As soon as we come down to concrete cases and specifically seek a single one of these alleged national characteristics—in literature, for instance—we immediately think of a large number of works from the same nation that do not possess it. For example, it is in France, the land of Latin clarity, that obscure poetry flourishes (Gérard de Nerval, Pétrus Borel, Rimbaud, Appollinaire, Breton). The world's most bombastic poet, Victor Hugo, is a product of the country of elegant conciseness. It is in the nation so often praised for its spirit of moderation that Rabelais, Chauvin, the Marquis de Sade, Lautréamont, Céline, and Sartre provoked scandals. Reserved and puritanical England gave birth to the fiery Marlowe, the brilliant Shakespeare, the mystical Blake, the imaginative Coleridge, the exuberant Lord Byron, the scandalous Oscar Wilde.

Without realizing it, in an inquiry one sometimes takes as the point of departure the very conclusion that is to be established. If the thesis is that culture has different national characteristics in various countries, one chooses sharply contrasting authors and decrees that each is characteristic of his respective nation; thus one starts with

the conclusion that was to be determined. Then, noting among the authors the contrasts that were taken as the basis of selection, one triumphantly concludes: "There we see the result of having been born on different sides of the border." However, when a comparison of authors of the same nationality discloses equally obvious differences among them, such differences are imputed to the infinite variations of temperament, training, associations, love affairs, illnesses, and vices, and the authors' common nationality, which should have leveled out the effects of all these, is completely forgotten. Baudelaire's works, for example, are explained psychoanalytically by his Oedipus complex, psychobiologically by his sexual depravity, existentially by his refusal to achieve freedom, literarily by his desire to combine romantic sentiment with Parnassian perfection; they are never attributed to his French citizenship. But when Baudelaire is compared with foreign authors, psychological, philosophical, and social interpretations vanish before the transcendent importance of the passport.

No one, of course, can deny the influence of the social milieu upon literature, but this cannot be considered a *national* influence. Social and geophysical factors cannot be grouped into neat bundles bound together by a country's borders, since, in a given period of history, there are similar institutions and customs in many different countries. There is no doubt that the heat of the sun, the color of the sky, the height of the hills, the taste of fruit, the songs of the road, the stories of the nursery, the nostalgia of an aristocracy, or the hope of a revolution all condition cultural works. But these all blend into a constantly changing complex of circumstantial or transitory phenomena, local or international, to which it is impossible to assign a national common denominator.

The belief that great intellectual accomplishments are necessarily and basically marked by their national origins is an expression of a desire more often than it is one of factual observation: the desire to fuse culture with the huge alloy of prejudice, selfishness, and mystiques of the herd from which nationalism forges its armor. The purpose, above all, is to degrade the mind by denying its freedom. The aim is to make the creator dependent upon obscure forces that supposedly spring from the depths of the Nation's earth and of the national past. The Nation seeks to play God to its creatures and to say to the most independent of them—the thinker, the artist, the writer—"Without the inspiration of my vital force, you are nothing."

One need only reflect coolly to understand why national characteristics have so little influence upon creations of the mind.

The first reason is that cultural crossing takes place even more rapidly and inextricably than racial crossing. If it is impossible to find pure ethnic traits in a population, how can we expect to find them in its books? In fact, the cultured public has always sought the universal man in its literary heroes, and lasting success has crowned the achievements of authors who have been able to escape the limitations of particularism and attain the universal.

The second reason is that the deep underlying characteristics of humanity that determine great literature vary little from one country to another.

If by culture we understand the sum total of the highest achievements of thought and art—those great works springing from the deepest human aspirations, which merge with the most universal of human desires—then it is clear that culture cannot be divided along national lines. This higher

level of the mind is expressed by themes, concepts, and feelings, irrespective of country of origin. Where fundamental problems are concerned, culture recognizes neither Germany nor France nor Spain nor Russia, but rather man and woman, truth and error, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, trust and doubt, impotence and desire, pleasure and pain, dream and reality. Choice among the high alternatives with which the mind is confronted obviously cannot depend upon the side of the border on which one is born. Which must the scientist consult to learn if the earth turns: the blood from which he was born or the experiment he has devised? Will a man, on the basis of his uniform, decide whether two and two make four? What passport will tell him whether a woman's smiling face promises nobility or ruin?

Unhappily for those who would like to attribute a lyrical essence to national unity, the essential forms of civilization have become very much the same everywhere in the world. Everywhere men advocate—even if they do not apply—the same fundamental moral code: "Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not betray, thou shalt not kill." Everywhere they establish families, seek solitude for their intimate pleasures, send their children to school, work in fields, shops, and offices, fear death and court love. Everywhere they record their thoughts and passions in books, statues, paintings, vases, textiles, and songs. Everywhere they calculate with the same arithmetic, weigh with the same scales, build according to the same geodesy, and grasp with the same hands. Everywhere they look at their children with the same light in their eyes and the same smile on their lips.

The form of their eyes and the shape of their lips matter little. The light and the smile constitute the source, the object, and the emblem of culture.

IS THE NATION A SECRETED SHELL OR AN IMPOSED MOLD?

What remains, then, at the heart of that divinity whose existence is so eloquently attested by the countless bloody conflicts it has provoked? Would you deny, we shall be asked, this almost instinctive tendency, observed among all men since the dawn of history, to form groups larger than their families, confederations or tribes able to protect them, inspire them, and give them significance?

In this last attempt to give national unity an inherent character, there are two theses that should be distinguished: one claims that the Nation is based upon a need for self-defense, the other sees it founded upon a desire for self-exaltation.

The belief that the unity of the nation results from the necessity of defending the individuals who compose it is contradicted by the fact that patriotism is much more ardent in states that practice aggression than in those that fear it. The example of Hitler's Germany is sufficient proof that the delirium of nationalism results less from the need to protect the national heritage from the enemy than from a desire to satiate one's own greed. Nationalism has never been observed to grow cool because the nation was not threatened. In South America, countries which, for generations to come, are safe from overseas invasion are nonetheless creating out of whole cloth a fanatical cult of nationalism. Though they are threatened by no one, their fervent flag waving is beginning to disturb everyone.

I do not mean to deny that there are cases in which one nation is really threatened by another, and I recognize that national unity then provides valuable protection. There are even circumstances in which this protection takes on high moral and political meaning. When a coun-

try is the victim of aggression, as was France under the Nazi heel, there is no doubt that the fate of the whole population is bound up with its national sovereignty. National unity then becomes an extremely concrete matter—the unity of the enslaved, and national independence takes on a higher meaning—the liberation of the enslaved. All this is true, but it does not prove what would have to be proved in order to establish the theory of the inherent nature of the Nation: namely, that men have grouped themselves into nations to meet the imperious necessity of mutual aid against foreigners, a necessity itself arising from natural circumstances. Yet it was not the natural circumstances of the artisans and peasants of Essex and Roussillon that forced England to fight the Czar in the Crimea or France to pick a quarrel with Juárez in Mexico. For more than a thousand years conflicts have resulted not from invasions by hostile hordes but from the disputes of sovereigns or political and economic clashes. Though war can make the individual feel concretely the value of the national community, war arises only from nationalistic rivalries; the Nation proves its value only against dangers it has itself provoked. If nations survive because their peoples fight, peoples fight because nations survive.

A similar analysis is applicable to all the forms of solidarity that are commonly thought of as the causes of national unification. These, upon examination, turn out to be the results of national divisions. Apart from the form of solidarity that unites the victims of aggression, the form most often referred to is that expressed in economic protectionism. It is true that if tariff barriers were removed overnight, without previous precautions, serious economic crises would result. Many high-cost industries that can survive only through the protection of such barriers would have to discharge their workers. But who can fail to see

that the Nation here protects only what it has artificially inflated? If industries can no longer face the open air of the world without danger, it is only because nations have forced them to live in stuffy confinement. But is it therefore commendable to prevent windows from ever being opened?

We see, then, that the interests of the people are bound to the Nation only to the extent that the Nation has previously entrapped them. In noting this fact, we take the first step toward a valid theory of the national bond: the Nation is not a shell secreted from men's flesh and instincts but a mold within which historical circumstances have imprisoned these instincts and this very flesh. It does not spring from the blood of individuals but is *sui generis* a product of social life.

We shall discover the exact nature of that mold by analyzing the second of our theses—that the national group results from the natural tendency impelling men to seek a broader and more exciting sphere than their immediate surroundings. I freely concede that an instinct impels men to search for a setting wider than that of family or tribe, capable of inspiring them and giving their lives more meaning. But I cannot see in this fact the validity of the form and extent of existing nations. I do not understand why that desire should be fulfilled precisely within the framework of those national borders that twist and cross one another so strangely on the map, so few of them coinciding with any natural geophysical line. I do not understand why some men have found that an area of one hundred square miles is sufficient to satisfy their need to belong to a unit larger than the family, while others could not settle for less than ten million.

This observation discloses a flaw common to all the theories of nationalism we have discussed: none explains

why the bond it invokes—whether it be race, language, culture, or tradition—exercises its cohesiveness only within such arbitrary yet strict boundaries. This cutting up of the map, with its simultaneously random and imperative character, is the most striking fact about the existence of nations, but it cannot be accounted for by any theory of immanence.

The very concept of the nation into which a man is born is confused at the outset, for a man is born not in a nation but in a bed. Is this, then, the full extent of the earth's surface that he ought to revere? Of course not. Perhaps, then, his house? But this will not do, either. His village? But it is too small. His province? Up to what distance? Ten miles or one hundred or one thousand? If he was born in Hendaye, why should the area of his devotion extend hundreds of leagues to the north but not more than five hundred yards to the south? Let us suppose he is from Lorraine and wants to determine to which square miles he owes his love and loyalty. If he was born before Louis XV married Marie Leczinski, this area will lie far to the east, but if he was born afterward, he will find it immediately to the west. But if the shape of the nation fluctuates in accordance with political fortunes, the conclusion is inescapable that the nation can no more find a spontaneous basis in nature than in race, traditions, culture, or self-defense, and can have meaning only as an administrative entity formed by cross currents of politics.

The sole common trait shared by all the millions of members of a nation is their nationality. The one thing they have in common is this nationality, and this is something superimposed by an outside agency; it is not inherent in any biopsychological sense. The only distinguishing feature borne by all men in any given country is acquired at the town hall after their birth: the document certifying

that they belong to that particular nation. This is also the basis upon which they will be brought together about twenty years later in the only truly common and nonindividual garb, which is thus appropriately called the uniform.

We arrive at a definition: the Nation is an expanse of land where men have been subjected to a single legislative and executive apparatus strongly and lengthily enough for their previous dissimilarities to fade. Or, in the jargon of philosophy: the Nation is consubstantial with the state. Satirically, we might say that the Nation is that part of the universe in which a single police force is authorized to club the inhabitants.

Though this definition is not especially sublime, it seems to us to be the only one compatible with the facts. Every time the fortunes of history have grouped peoples and provinces together for a fairly long time under a single stable administration, this amalgam, quite independently of the different races, religions, languages, and cultures from which it was formed, has become a nation with its own national cult. As administrative unity became established more firmly and nationalist propaganda grew more intense, national feeling also became stronger, even under tyrannical regimes—which indicates that state propaganda contributes much more to the prestige of the national idea than does the spontaneous gratitude of peoples for a noble heritage.

THE VALUE OF THE FATHERLAND

It matters little to us, patriots will reply, whether the nation is explained by one cause or another, so long as its existence is admitted. Your analysis does not deny the Nation; it simply strips it of its sacred attributes and reduces

it to a casual collection of secular institutions. But even thus stripped, it provides a tight-fitting garb for society.

Tight-fitting, perhaps, but not irremovable. But if "true" patriots accept this view, they will feel naked. It is essential to them for the Nation to be a skin and not a garment, for it to depend upon vital forces from below, not upon superimposed laws. If it is an institutional growth and not a natural crystallization, a frame and not a tree deeply rooted in the soil, it will lose its immutable essence and become a product of circumstances, dependent upon human wills. If institutions have brought it into being, others may eliminate it. A Nation made of the material we have described is no longer worthy of a mystic cult.

Thus it is that states—especially totalitarian ones—exert tireless efforts in an attempt to transmute this juridico-political bond into a biological tie. The need to employ such methods to sustain patriotic feeling—long training at school, endless pageantry, rewards for those who honor patriotism and punishments for those who ignore it—is sufficient proof that this feeling is not innate. No society has ever felt the need to indoctrinate each new generation with the delight of kissing! Moreover, when such feelings are freed from suggestion, nothing necessarily roots them in a predetermined part of the world. They are arbitrary and revocable. But the crucial point, however, is that patriotism, even of the most bucolic sort, loses its meaning if one does not love *one's own* country, love *it* more than any other, and recognize as a categorical imperative one's debt of loyalty to it. Nothing remains of patriotism if each man may accord his preference to any country or to none, to the West today and the East tomorrow, if he loves his country when he feels free in it, and fights against it when he feels that it persecutes him.

Since the underlying function of patriotism is to ensure the allegiance of subjects, whatever the conduct of officials may be, we can understand why it is important for the rulers that this feeling be lyrical and beyond dispute; why it cannot be left to the chance tastes and opinions of each individual; why the greatness it tries to stimulate is primarily military, geographic, and commercial—that is, of a sort that implies a growth of power for those in positions of control. We can understand why allegiance tends irresistibly to regiment citizens instead of making them free men; why it is propagated with such zealous care by all states that plan to use it to increase their power—in short, why it is the predestined instrument of totalitarianism.

The fact that this feeling is inculcated rather than innate does not prevent it from becoming very intense. The idea that only feelings arising from obscure sources, such as heredity or the soil, can become intense is another typically totalitarian belief. To convince ourselves of the contrary, we need only trace back through history the river of blood resulting from doctrinal teachings. It was not promptings of the blood that led so many Christians to affirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, while so many others believed in the symbolic presence. None had heard of these things except in their respective catechisms, but with solemnity, and this was enough to make them kill one another. In the same way, patriotism, though only the product of education and propaganda, may nevertheless become the motivating force of great historical events. It has been able to make group passions well up, but this does not mean it is the sacred fountain from which all social life must spring.

No. Since the world has been cut into fragments by national boundaries, life has developed in separate compartments, like branches trained along a wall. These restricted

growths in turn foster the sprouting of plants that can thrive only within their sphere. Thus the process feeds on its own effects. Like all self-maintained systems, the Nation finally fashions the very components of which it is constituted. But the question that must be raised is whether or not the components are healthy. Unfortunately, there is no doubt of the reply. For who can claim that patriotism has solved the conflicts that afflict our unhappy world? Why persist in preserving these few jealous and divisive interests of the humble as well as the powerful, which the Nation does indeed protect, if they can be exchanged for more substantial and general interests? Why, especially in regions as fragmented as Western Europe, continue to fight for a scrap of that land that, if united, could provide a better living for more people? But countries will not be unified, and consequently peace will not be secured, as long as life without nations is not considered sounder and finer than life with nations.

If some are shocked at such a daring view, let them note that rootless cosmopolites are not alone in thinking that national borders are no longer protective enclosures for the peoples they surround—if indeed they ever were. I refer them to an author who could scarcely be accused of radicalism, to Montesquieu, who wrote: "If I know of something useful to my nation that would be prejudicial to Europe, or useful to Europe and prejudicial to mankind, I would regard it as a crime . . . for I am a man before I am a Frenchman."

IN THE SERVICE OF HISTORY

In the last century Marxism developed another cult, which at first seemed different than the cult of patriotism but which soon proved itself essentially the same. Origi-

nally its purpose was to mobilize pity and enthusiasm for the cause of a disinherited class, the proletariat, a cause that seemed more positive than that of theoretical national glory. But in order for the proletariat to seem worthy of ecstatic devotion, it was necessary to invest it with the "historic mission" of freeing the whole of humanity at the same time that it freed itself. This mission was to be accomplished through an inevitable series of conflicts creating a collectivized economy, out of which paradise would grow as inevitably as the tree from the seed. From that time on, the cause of the proletariat was to be identified with the historical process, and as the proletarians were expected to die for that process it was necessary to elevate the cause to a transcendent role worthy of supreme sacrifices. Thus Marxism, starting with a concrete program, ended with myth. A new idol was forged: History, even more bloodthirsty than the Nation.

Thus a junction was effected between the totalitarianism of the left and that of the right. It is truly significant that in the cult of History the two great totalitarian currents of our time meet and merge: communism and fascism, their creed contained in Mussolini's striking formula: "Outside history man does not exist." [2]

Although the hypnotic power of History, equal to that of the Nation, has been exploited especially by all forms of totalitarianism, it has not failed to influence the minds of democrats as well. The new prophetess, with her scientific pretensions, had the means of dazzling the plebeian rationalist family that had scarcely finished freeing itself from dogma; its freedom was too recent for it not to be still fascinated by soothsayers. "History proves . . ." "History decrees . . ."—this is much more solemn than "the elections prove . . ." "the elections decree . . ." The totalitarians have only to reproach democrats for losing sight

of any "historical objective" in order to make those who have not yet brought their emotional inclinations into harmony with their rational aspirations feel guilty toward the new idol. If they are shown that in the maelstrom of parties no one knows any longer where he is heading, they will agree—without inquiring whether anyone has ever known where he was going—that apart from the Great Goal, politics and even life are only dismal squabbles.

However, this attitude is by no means self-evident. For thousands of years it was believed that the function of government was not to "go somewhere"—that is, to engineer social systems—but simply to allow people to live by preserving public order and overcoming difficulties as they arose. It was thought that those in power should be good managers, not inspired explorers. It might be argued that the idea of progress (a relatively recent idea, since even Rousseau considered any innovation a regression) has given dynamic and teleological conceptions of history their vogue. But the idea of progress is not in itself teleological. It leads one to expect a little more from tomorrow than today has brought, but not to imagine that all tomorrows are linked together as necessary stages on a road leading to an ultimate, predetermined summit, visible from below in all its splendor. It was Hegel who, regimenting progress in the Prussian manner, invented "historical necessity" and assigned to collective destiny a pre-established end devised to fill men with anguish and thus drive them to a cult.

. . . THAT HURRICANE IN WHICH MEN ARE THE DUST

Usually we understand by "history" the record and interpretation of past events. But "history" does not interest the "historicists" in this positive sense. They establish

the cult of a conjectural history of the future, and this permits mystical speculation. In their eyes, every act is gestation, every event annunciation, every result fatality. Behind the curtain of immediate events in which the simple-minded perceive only a war, a famine, or clashing ambitions, the Hegelian soothsayer sees the titanic forces of the historical process at work. Everything that happens has a reason and a reference in the "great scroll." [3]

In a liberal century, historicism appears as democratic absolutism, since it formulates tyrannical decrees with the voice of the people; and in a society where religious aspirations subsist behind atheistic opinions, it offers the further advantage of being a lay religion, because it transforms profane substance into sacred. Putting itself in the *avant-garde* of modernism, the cult of History, in contrast to spiritual religions, impels the masses to take an active interest in politics. However, it binds their political action to purposes they cannot grasp, by employing one of the oldest of devices: sublimation. The troublesome demands of individuals are sublimated in the transcendent necessities of mankind, which provide an inexhaustible source of excuses for the rulers, and of resignation for the ruled. Instead of satisfying the appetites of present generations, the ministers of History prepare the austere births of social orders crowned with halos of virtue.

Hazy and distant paradises such as the classless society remain as inaccessible to the living as is the Great Beyond. Despite its earthly character, the religion of History offers no more material consolation than does a faith in heaven, unless we call consolation that kind of frenzy into which men are thrown when they are allowed to lose control of their destiny. Each is a master of his own fate, but it is understood that the fate of the individual will count for

nothing. This historicism develops in peoples a remarkable mixture of pretentiousness and resignation.

"Resignation" is too mild a word. Causes that are above man always have a strong tendency to turn against him; for this reason History, that hurricane in which men are the dust, attracts totalitarians, for whom politics and life must be only propitiatory sacrifices. The true function of the cult of History—one might say its historical function—is to mislead the democratic aspirations that impel men to take an active part in their own fate, by making them believe this fate is condemned to a long and difficult birth requiring the intervention of a skilled midwife: the dictator.

It was not simply through a liking for provocation that the founder of fascism so ostentatiously adopted a point of view contrary to the obvious facts (which show that apart from man, History does not exist). He was impelled to adopt it by the use he intended to make of his aphorism. The claim that History gives men their existence throws upon it the responsibility for their calvary. Through such claims the bloody efforts demanded by service to the leader are transmuted into offerings to the sublime process. "History gives me life, History takes it away, blessed be the name of History"—a splendid state of mind for the ruled if the ruler has managed to give History his name. The modern dictator, being neither heir to a throne nor elected by the people, needs to sanction his position by claiming to be—and thinking he is—sent by destiny. History is a certificate of legitimacy that a usurper without a past asks of the future without a witness.

MODERN CASUISTRY

If redemption through History is exceedingly severe for its servants, of its theoreticians it demands acrobatics in

logic. Since they propose to dissipate the concrete demands of the masses in mystical transports, and, with scientific certainty, derive dogmatic necessities from chance events, it is not surprising that this pedantic cult should be especially replete with sophistry.

Following their spiritual father, Hegel, our crusaders of the "process of becoming" have not failed to don the garb of dialectics, that primitive ideology of bullies. History is the *real,* therefore the *rational,* therefore the *just.* Stated differently, the dagger is the powerful, therefore the convincing, therefore the legitimate. However, all the undoubtedly *real* institutions History has forged up to the time its zealots take power are declared *unjust* and *irrational,* and thus to be overthrown without delay. Renewing the paradox of the busy messiahs—who are fatalists and activists at the same time—the totalitarians who claim to be certain they are acting in harmony with the course of History are those who exert themselves most in winning converts. According to them, an ineluctable law governs History, but it requires nothing less than the sacrifice of whole generations and a constant reign of terror to crush the plots that might alter its unalterable course.

For the Communists, History has none of those ineffable mysteries, characteristic of old-fashioned religions, that could be revealed only to the few elect able to decipher the thunder of Sinai. On the contrary, its laws and its truths are said to be clearly derived from books and statistics. How, then, can we understand the fact that they enlighten only the Central Committee? Or the fact that anyone could be mad enough to oppose them, and thus expose himself to predetermined failure? Evidently an evil genie must have led astray those wretches who try to reverse the process. Thus, to account for infidels and traitors, to History must be added a defiant Satan who will assume

the form of the Trotskyist, the Jew, or the Freemason, according to the place he plants his cloven hoofs. The cult is now ready for the shedding of blood: there are the good and the evil, the pro-historicists and the anti-historicists. The *antis* work in the dark, as befits creatures of the devil; the *pros* are able to attribute all their troubles to the plots of the *antis*.

One of the extravagances to which the historicists are driven is the constant revision of the past. Since political successes lack the permanence of religious dogmas, what happens to the authority of History if the camp whose victory the historicist predicted is defeated tomorrow, if the eternal friend becomes the implacable enemy, or if Comrade Great Leader makes a 180 degree turn in the line that he had assured would lead directly to the final goal? The only way of reconciling these sudden changes in the infallible process of Becoming is to claim that, in rereading, with the right pair of glasses, what has occurred, one does find signs showing that what has happened had always been destined to happen: the conquered of today were victorious yesterday only so that their present defeat might stand out more clearly; the old friend merely feigned friendship, the better to hide his malevolence; the Great Leader's switch in line had always existed potentially in the straight line he followed.

And if all this was written between the lines, why not go further and declare that it was written *in* the lines? Why not pass from the thorny exegesis of History to remaking it at will? Since History is a coquette capricious with her favors, presumptuous persons who claim to be in her confidence and to know in advance each of her new lovers quickly become confused and make themselves ridiculous. They prefer to assert that there never is any other lover, and that, moreover, History is not a coquette,

as superficial observers believe, but a constant though mysterious goddess for whom they are ministers and not procurers. Therefore they will boldly say that the camp that is vanquished today has never been triumphant, that the day's traitor has never been considered a friend, that the line has never pointed in any direction other than the present one, and that the Great Leader never reverses his policies.

Stalin, the most "historicist" of the totalitarians, was noted for an especially acute obsession with bringing the past into conformity with the present. It is known that he had a special service for the falsification of records, which prepared as many different editions of the Bolshevik annals for him as he gave different faces to his Bolshevism. It was this service that gave George Orwell the inspiration for his hypnotizing Ministry of Truth, where thousands of text-choppers busied themselves every day with sewing together today's virginity from the shreds and fragments of yesterday. His searing novel, *1984*, depicts the totalitarians so devoted to the service of History that they reach the extreme of delirium, since for them the future is always certain and the past a perpetual mystery.

Another classic device historicists use to mislead consists in transforming a disagreeable reality into an abstract concept through the use of a generality (preferably written with capital letters). For example, this operation permits such contradictory statements by Soviet apologists as: the Soviet proletariat is enslaved, but the Soviet State is Proletarian; factory managers speculate, but the Economy is planned; Communist writers live in servitude, but Communist Culture is Emancipated; actually, Russian children shiver, but historically, Russian Youth is Warm.

When disagreeable realities cannot be transformed in

this way, they are derided as unimportant contingencies, and in their stead values are advanced for which "historical content" is claimed. When David Rousset made his courageous accusations against the Soviet system of concentration camps, the famous existentialist Jean Paul Sartre decided he should break with the writer who denounced the camps rather than with the dictator who filled them.[4] Not that Sartre denied the horror of the Soviet concentration camps, but he considered it of little consequence compared to the persistence in the U.S.S.R. of official slogans such as "the Classless Society" and "Internationalism." They were enough to make him conclude: "We have the same values as a Communist." However, when this philosopher reads the irreproachable slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" on the façades of bourgeois buildings, he does not conclude: "We have the same values as a bourgeois." He judges capitalism by its present acts, not by its historical intentions, whereas he considers the proclaimed intentions of communism more significant than the actual events taking place behind the propaganda. He claims that a political doctrine is defined not by the daily practice of the cult of the leader, of chauvinism, and of inequality, but by lip service to the idol of the Classless Society.

In all the countries where the Red Army brought them to power, those Communists, who our philosopher feels are "historically" on his side, have set about slandering, deporting, and assassinating those who stood for human values. But then, these were only poor human values, such as freedom and tolerance, while the values our historicists champion are redoubtable, fundamental values such as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Collectivization of Industry—values as barren as a notary's jargon.

It is very revealing that the new redeemers of humanity consider they have reached the highest point of their thought when they are at their driest. A being as slight and singular as man obviously cannot penetrate the majestic mysteries of historical process. That is why these mysteries contain only abstract collective entities adapted to the vast scale of centuries, such as Dialectics, Classes, and Nations. They are choice pieces out of which to build systems to dazzle the mob and theories to hypnotize the elite.

THE IMPOSTURE OF HISTORY

While racist doctrines, even with their philosophical trimmings, center around vulgar prejudices, historicism frequently is impressive because it has its origin in the elevated preoccupations of the spirit. At the outset there may be an authentically cultural inspiration in the attempt to find a meaning in social phenomena, to attribute to plans a certain precedence over action, to reflect upon the consequences today's efforts may have on the conditions of tomorrow. But these initially healthy steps end in delirium if, giving way to the demon of exaggeration, they elaborate the attempt to see a day ahead into the process of Becoming, if they transform a flexible plan into infallible finality, if they convert approximate and therefore fertile insights into rigid and hence sterilizing dogmas.

It is high time to tear off the veils of sophistry woven around tyrannies. We give undue honor to the assassins of liberty if we follow them on a philosophical level while their victims die, unconsoled. Can we be insensitive to the cruelty, even the indecency, of splitting hairs over the future while standing before the charnel pits of the pres-

ent? Do we not hear each victim cry out that History is an imposture?

"Go on killing, God will know his own," said the dogmatists of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew to the assassins. "Go on deporting, History will know the faithful," say today's dogmatists of the Holy Dialectics to the tyrants; and they add with an inspired air, "History will transform your society of slaves into socialism." No! With slaves History will never create anything but servitude. A century ago, before people had learned to sacrifice whole generations to philosophical speculations, this was known by every citizen who had a firmly fixed love of liberty. He knew that the means are always reflected in the end, and he did not need to investigate the holy mysteries of economic determinism, or the majestic course of the process of Becoming, to know that anyone who gagged criticism was a tyrant, and that tyranny was an evil. For the *Carbonaro* of Milan, for the student of Warsaw, for Victor Hugo on Jersey, it was not History that put them in chains but Metternich, Romanov, and Napoleon III. Though they were imprisoned, their wise view of social relations enabled them to feel the confidence of the upright man, to accuse the despot, and to laugh when he claimed to be making men happy in spite of themselves.

Thus the flame was passed from companion to companion, from teacher to pupil, from generations freeing themselves to a generation more free—and not from a martyred generation to an allegedly blessed generation. For one of the greatest follies based on the idolatry of History is the idea, so widespread today, that the suffering of living people has no effect upon the evolution of social forms, which is said to depend only upon production plans and party instructions. History is thus reduced to a succession of blueprints.

It must be that the casuists of History have never set foot upon the adventurous path of freedom. Otherwise, how could they not know that it must be re-claimed continually from the thorny brambles of oppression that overrun it as soon as there is a break in the long line of pioneers? They must never have examined civilization carefully if they do not know its breath is frail and it must be watched over ceaselessly if it is not to be smothered by fanaticism. They must never have known the anxious search for progress if they do not know that it must be tended attentively every day, like an irrigated garden.

Of all the aberrations for which historicists are responsible, perhaps the most fatal is the belief that progress lies not in the quest of spiritual values but rather in the stockpiling of achievements. According to this idea, progress is a kind of store where finished products pile up—a store that can be closed for a century or two until future generations are better able to make purchases from it. But when the doors are reopened, it will be seen that the goods have all rotted.

In fact, when dictators bolt the doors, it is with the intention of never opening them again.

THE MIRAGE OF TRANSCENDENT CAUSES

Nation and History are only the most typical of the transcendent causes to which the totalitarians urge us to sacrifice our liberties. They have proposed others as well—a race, a social class, a philosophical doctrine. It would take too long to analyze them all, but it is interesting, by considering what points they have in common, to look for the reasons that have led the public to accept them as goals higher than the objectives of everyday politics.

COLLECTIVE VALUE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL VALUE

Most men believe that it is worthier to serve Nation, History, race, or class than a political conviction, for they consider it obvious that "the collective is morally superior to the individual." This is an aphorism in which clarity of meaning bears an inverse relationship to grandiloquence of expression. The human mind is constantly deluded by these thunderbolts produced by short circuits between high-voltage words, by these pseudo self-evident propositions, doubtless full of charm for the poet and interesting for the psychologist, but pernicious when an attempt is made to impose them upon society as fundamental truths. They are similar to the axiom that arouses the enthusiasm of so many artists: "Everything beautiful is moral"—such as a raging sea, for example.

To assert the superiority of the collective over the individual, it should first be made clear whether one refers to superiority in strength, value, or numbers; whether "collective" and "individual" refer to an action or a goal, since a *collective* action may serve an *individual* goal, and an *individual* action a *collective* goal. But even with this added precision, it would still be difficult to make such a general pronouncement. Lynching, which is a collective "justice," is universally considered inferior to the personal justice of a judge. The individual is regarded as intellectually and morally superior to the mob. In fact, we often speak of the stupidity and cruelty of the mob. We have seen that the conduct of the national collectivity is much more blameworthy than that of most individuals. Finally, is it meaningful to say that the individual poetic activity of a Paul Valéry is inferior to the activity of collective bodies such as the Academy or the Army?

The only way to give meaning to this proposition is to

apply it to *goals* and to conceive of collective goals as the points of convergence of large numbers of individual aspirations. Then, in saying that collective goals are superior to individual goals, we assert a clear superiority—that of number. While few people profit personally from a political position, many are interested in the greatness of the Nation or the realization of History. Serving these causes amounts, therefore, to serving the greatest number. But is that not the whole program of democracy? This result is all the more ironic because the alleged superiority of transcendent causes over partisan objectives is brought back to that very pre-eminence of individual judgment that the totalitarian would discredit. They want the Collective Cause to be an ideal in itself, able to oppose its natural sublimity to the pettiness of private interests; and now we see that it takes on value only as the integrated expression of these private interests. They show us a glittering star, and now we find only a balance sheet.

We reach the same conclusion—that it is the individual who confers value upon the group—if we investigate the sources of the ethics of sacrifice, in the name of which the totalitarians try to sanctify the service of transcendent causes. If we ask what final goal ethical systems seek to promote—consciously or unconsciously—rather than what rules of conduct they impose, we find that none has ever claimed any objective other than the happiness of the individual. Buddhism does not preach privation as a value in itself but as a means of escaping greater suffering and attaining a state of beatitude. Christianity advocates mortification of the flesh because it claims thus to assist in attaining rapture of the soul, and the soul is held to be superior to the body. It wishes to master the senses in order to reach a greater, eternal happiness. It is still easier to see that in social morality, disciplinary precepts are

ultimately justified as the instruments of greater individual joy: we must work in order to create, but we must create so that citizens may enjoy the product of our labor; we must limit ourselves in order to leave others their share, but we must leave others their share so that they will leave us ours, etc.

However, if individual happiness is the supreme objective of all ethical systems, how can we explain that in totalitarian systems such an idea appears absurd? Here we come upon one of the great traps in our path. This man who seeks happiness is a weak but ingenious animal. Therefore he has joined with his fellows in a body—society—that is able to protect him and allow him to make full use of his talents. And as long as society was poor (and it still is), to exist it had to impose rules of renunciation upon those whose self-realization it was supposed to promote. We can imagine the nature of the drama that resulted: the purpose of the rules was forgotten and they were worshiped as ends in themselves. Society, which should have been only an instrument, became an idol and, consequently, a tyranny. Here we see the age-old story of weapons replacing the ideals they were designed to defend; of parties, created to liberate the oppressed, becoming their masters; of machines, made to serve man, enslaving him. And as society relegates to oblivion the individual happiness it was to foster, society's morality heaps shame upon it. Instead of making man grow, it thinks only of making him bend in submission. Man is so stupefied by injunctions to heroism, invitations to abstinence, exhortations to merge with the crowd, that he finally yields to a sort of reflexive behavior, so that when he hears "renunciation" preached, he translates it as "virtue." However, the fact that sacrifice and virtue do not necessarily go together has been proved to us in a particularly striking

fashion by the totalitarian regimes, which, in spite of their austere values (obedience, courage, self-sacrifice), have brought forth only evil.

When Saint-Just wrote "Happiness is a new idea in the world," he did not suspect the extent to which he was anticipating. One hundred and fifty years later the individual's claims to happiness still appear so sacrilegious to mankind, trained in contrition for thousands of years, that even many democrats, otherwise reasonable, still do not dare to claim them openly. On the contrary, to the degree to which they have already committed the other sacrilege of seizing power from legitimate princes, they feel in a confused way that they must try to obtain pardon by demonstrating an exemplary respect for the traditional forms of penitence—like employees who, although they have left their employer to start out on their own, remain indelibly marked by his style and his precepts. Morality lags behind politics, and politics behind technology; this is one of the essential phenomena of sociology. In advocating hedonism side by side with freedom, and in basing the value of collectivity upon that of the individual, democracy will finally adopt moral principles in harmony with its polical statutes.

THE ARGUMENT OF THE OBVIOUS

Public opinion endows transcendent causes with logical as well as moral superiority. Men are convinced that the value of objectives such as the Nation and History is more obvious than the value of political programs, and they think that this truth must be evident in all its glory to all those who do not consciously turn their eyes from it. These "obvious" propositions, capable of rallying immediate general support, are immensely pleasing because free-

dom of thought, when based upon them, no longer entails either risk or hardship. Nothing is more delightful than for all people to be democrats, and for all to be in agreement.

Unfortunately, nothing is more impossible. The alleged obviousness of these propositions is just one more addition to the list of human illusions. Transcendent causes, like political programs commonly considered narrow and contentious, do not provide either indisputable or infallible directives. Let us take the example of the Nation. When one watches it function, the only obvious fact is that the many groups of which it is composed do not have harmonious interests. Exporters want to devalue the currency, but importers to raise the rate of exchange; owners of vineyards want to reduce the cultivation of sugar beets, but sugar producers want to reduce the number of vineyards; churches want denominational schools, but school teachers want public schools; those who are earning money demand a *laissez-faire* policy, while those who are losing money demand state intervention; the poor want the state to undertake social reforms, but the rich call for economy; radio broadcasts are too intellectual for the sports fans, but too given over to sports for intellectuals. Is colonial reform mentioned? It is always too extreme to suit vested colonial interests, but never far-reaching enough for liberals at home. Even in foreign policy, where the Nation functions as an entity, it is not any easier to discover where the common interest lies. In each new situation several alliances can be claimed, with apparently equal validity, to serve it best.

All these pressures in opposing directions express aspirations considered consistent with the national interest by those who hold them. Which one should prevail? If we must work out some compromise from their confused

clash, how is it to be done? Honest observers will agree that the debates of politicians ultimately have no purpose other than to provide a sense of direction in this labyrinth. It is simple impudence for the totalitarians to claim to be guided by the beacon of a higher cause when we see them groping in the shadows just as politicians do and grounding the sacred Ship of State on as many shoals. Still, instead of modestly saying "I propose," the totalitarians strike poses, like mediums, and exclaim: "the Nation demands . . ." They know nothing at all about it, but this gives them an inspired and altruistic appearance. By comparison, the democrat who proposes a political program seems materialistic and driven by base interests.

History is even less able than the Nation to provide indisputable directives, for the good reason that whereas it is difficult enough to synthesize the diverse but at least known ingredients of the Nation, the task becomes completely impossible if we add to it the unfathomable mysteries of the future. The broader the scope of our inquiry in space and time, the greater the obscurities and doubts to which it must give rise. This is why the details of History are much less obvious than those of a political program. To be convinced of this, we need only recall the erroneous predictions of the soothsayers of the process—even the most scientific of them, Karl Marx. In the name of historical determinism, Marx predicted that nationalism was going to weaken: it became more inflamed; that the lot of the proletariat would deteriorate: it improved; that the middle classes were destined to disappear: they flourished; that his disciples would be emancipators: they were tyrants.

Prophets must be very pretentious, and the faithful very credulous, to assert successfully that the value of the cause they propose for our worship is self-evident. Just as in

scientific disciplines we can reach certainty only through experimentation, so in the social sphere enlightenment can come only through the free clashes of opinions and desires; political controversies are to democracy what experiments are to science. The fact that transcendent causes do not enable us to escape from divergences of opinion is confirmed by the paradox that the priests of the allegedly most brilliant causes always organize the most oppressive police systems. Their characteristic predilection for forced unity indicates their hidden feeling that their idols do not inspire spontaneous unity.

THE ARGUMENT OF ETERNITY

The most subtle argument consists in claiming that transcendent causes derive their greatness from their immortality. For such poor mortal creatures that we are, immortality constitutes, *a priori,* an unequaled virtue. Of course, this is true only on condition that it is attributed to a worthy object; if it is applied to an evil one, it would only make that evil more intolerable. Even supposing a cause to be excellent, its permanence is not justification for making it the object of an exclusive cult. There is no reason why the eternal excellence of an object should inspire an attitude of adoration. The diamond is precious and unchanging, but only primitive fetishists would sacrifice their sons to its brilliance.

Therefore, the simple attribute of duration is not enough to justify the role of Moloch that transcendent causes are made to play by the totalitarians. They have to add that these causes are intimately bound to our being. The complete script thus takes the following form: "I have only a fleeting existence in this world, but I have received a precious gift from my ancestors: my Nation. They trans-

mitted it to me at the cost of great sacrifices, and I have a duty to pass it on intact and, if possible, enriched." Or: "The civilization I enjoy is the result of a long labor of History and would never have developed if my forefathers had not worked for the future; it is therefore up to me to hold high the torch and pass on this precious heritage to my descendants." We sense that what is essential in both cases is not that the heritage is eternal but that it is of ineffable worth. Thus we are brought back to our point of departure—the justification of causes by their superior value.

The reasoning continues less openly in these terms: "In taking my place in the endless caravan of generations and their achievements, and then contributing to the precious heritage, I shall have left my mark on something imperishable and I shall have received at least a fragment of immortality in exchange." The worship of supreme causes is thus brought back to the worship of oneself. Man is willing to sacrifice himself to something eternal if he can leave his mark on it so that eternity will be well aware of what it owes him. But the Eternal Cause is more than an outlet for fleeting vanities. It is also a nourishing breast for the feeble, a life belt for those who are helplessly adrift, a coat of arms for plebeians. In every case, however, its deepest function is the satisfaction of the temporal need of the individual. Then why attack the hedonistic programs of politicians, which have no other object than this but which strive toward their goal more modestly and more frankly?

EVILS ENGENDERED BY TRANSCENDENT CAUSES

Even though transcendent causes lack intrinsic superiority over political causes, totalitarians will say that at least they do not have the evil effects of politics upon public

life. They claim that people who devote themselves to an ideal, even an illusory one, cannot expose themselves to as many calamities as those who are concerned only with their own immediate interests. This is a gross error.

Fanaticism is the first evil consequence of vows taken before the altar of transcendent causes. Totalitarians are not satisfied with moderate objectives subject to revision, useful only for pedestrian politicians. Since totalitarians must have sublime goals before them, it is inevitable that they should see only infamous turpitude behind such modest aims. If the cause is transcendent, how can its inspiration not bring about universal communion instantaneously, unless its wicked opponents are inspired by hellish, satanic evil? Those who, on one hand, turn around and around in the confused vapors of the absolute, must also, on the other, wade through the blood spilled by fanaticism.

Nothing is more revealing in this respect than the pictures fascists and Communists have of their opponents. They are not considered simply rivals, as in a democracy: they are unavowed saboteurs who wreck machines in the dark of night and meet in secret places to plot the people's ruin. It is no accident that they are identified with that instrument of Beelzebub, the viper. They must be inspired by an evil genius, if the great goal they oppose truly embodies nothing less than the genius of good.

Thus totalitarians are carried to the extremes where the zones of psychic fixation lie. There, conflicts necessarily become poisonous, struggles are waged pitilessly, and adversaries are damned; there, we hear nothing but curses and see only extermination. For this reason transcendent causes can never be served calmly. Fanaticism is bound to their cult as drunkenness is to intemperance. Underlying these substitutes offered as superior to politics we find a

blind mystique—a doctrine exciting but unconvincing, the crude symbols of which are capable of absorbing all the mental activity of primitive minds.

Finally, totalitarians long for something that will spare them all need for thought: a totem. But totems fall apart unless placed under a taboo, and in our age of reason they must be molded into a rigid philosophical system that claims to embrace all of reality and to have an answer to all problems. Universal keys, unitary theories, and infallible doctrines are only pretentious ways of remaining in ignorance. By banishing doubt, they quench inquiry and inflame intolerance. The cult of transcendent causes has followed a career that begins with the absolute and ends with the revolver.

When too many facts contradict a dogma, its high priest, before turning to the stake and the revolver, usually resorts first to sophistry and intellectual fraud. This is the second evil consequence of transcendent causes—that they are the basis for an unprecedented outburst of subterfuges, evasions, absurdities, falsifications, and deceit. Imagine the high-voltage sophistry the Communists have used to persuade not only terrorized Soviet subjects, but even free intellectuals in countries beyond the reach of the M.V.D., to acclaim a leader whose only deeds were to exterminate millions of workers, decree the death penalty for children, shoot those who helped him come to power, burn thousands of books, force science to consult his police rather than nature, and artists to paint nature along the lines fixed by his police.

The intelligentsia requires sophistry more than the people do, because it is less willing to recognize that it is giving up the rule of reason and abandoning itself to arbitrary symbols. Ashamed of its perverted love for the Inquisition, it gives a philosophical veneer to a theoretical

device that permits interpreting and justifying any and every crime. The more obscure the faith it supports, the more subtle the arguments used to vindicate its faith. It distills from culture the venom with which to poison culture.

These venoms have already succeeded in paralyzing, in a large segment of public opinion, the kind of instinct that since 1789 has protected civilization—or at least its honor—against despotic ventures. Fifty years ago, the case of a single Vera Figner outraged by a commissar of the Czar, of a single Francisco Ferrer shot in Spain, of a single Dreyfus unjustly sentenced, was enough to arouse universal indignation and overthrow cabinet ministers. But the sons of those who hissed the Czar in Paris because he held a few thousand opponents in Siberia today applaud dictators who kill as many people in a month as Czarist oppression did in a decade, and burn as many books as all the religious orders did in a thousand years. As infamies swell until the very earth groans, more and more subtle arguments are advanced until infamies are applauded. Once, every dungeon was an offense to conscience; today, concentration camps have become "stages of progress." The more victims there are, the more doctrine is elaborated. And the doctrine thus elaborated leads to declarations such as the following: "Even the experience of absolute horror like that of the concentration camp system does not determine a political position." [5] This sentence sums up modern anti-humanism. If one can think that politics ought not to be influenced by the suffering of men—even when this reaches an absolute of horror—it is because one does not think politics ought to be influenced by human factors at all; it is because one wants politics to listen to accents other than those of the human voice, satisfy needs other than human thirst, erect structures other than

human cities; it is because one wants politics to be nothing more than a long expiatory procession.

Transcendent causes do not offer sophistry to intellectuals alone. They prepare it for the common man as well, since the principal function of sophistry is to disguise reality. If workers are roughly treated, a democratic politician may have to resign from the cabinet; a totalitarian leader will say that it is for the good of the Cause and will be applauded. The totalitarian's skill lies in giving the impression of consulting the people's will, but this will is captured once and for all, to be devoted to an objective that the people cannot control. Thus the totalitarian gets around the principle of "government by the consent of the governed" by permanently imprisoning that consent in the maze of a transcendent cause: "I consult you, but since you are a man with a high ideal, and I am that ideal, you will always say yes."

The fundamental sophistry produced by the cult of supreme causes is: The end justifies the means. We know what rich dividends this maxim has brought to modern despots, and what success it has achieved among Marxists, even though it is contrary to their doctrine. The essence of all materialistic philosophy is that the ends are inevitably shaped by the means. The Marxist thesis holds that being determines consciousness, and the understructure the superstructure. However, to use dark and coercive means with the idea that these will lead to a bright and free end is to suppose just the opposite; in contradistinction to the Marxist thesis, it amounts to asserting that being can be enslaved while consciousness is freed, or that a superstructure of abundance can be built upon an understructure of scarcity.

There is no doubt that in ordinary life we are often forced to permit a certain moderate discrepancy between

what we advocate and what we do. As long as these deviations are brief, as long as they do not lead to putting whole generations into chains, they do not compromise the end we seek. But one generation is the precise limit beyond which there can be no return to our primary goals. We may, if absolutely necessary, think that two or three years of regimentation will permit a later flowering of freedom, but this is not possible if the time is extended to several decades. If the whole population spends all its active life in barracks or camps, then the only children we can expect from it will, in their turn, be soldiers or convicts.

Before taking power, totalitarians never say that their means will be so different from the marvelous ends they have announced. The Communists, for example, do not tell the people that they will sing only after a few generations have passed, but that in the meantime they will be called upon to groan. On the contrary, they seek votes by waxing indignant at the wretched lot of "workers and peasants," by conjuring up the beautiful and happy life within their reach, from which they are separated only by the wickedness of the capitalists. It is only when the Communists have been put into power by the generation they have promised so much to pamper that they suddenly decide that the happiness of the human race can grow out of no other humus than that generation's blood and tears.

We find, therefore, that there is nothing but vulgar demagogy behind the slogan that the end justifies the means, a two-faced slogan: innocuous before attaining the coveted power, expiatory afterward.

Lafargue called liberty, equality, and fraternity "metaphysical strumpets" because their venal charms disguised the sordid enterprises of bourgeois exploiters. The Bolshevik school has only perfected this practice. The transcendent causes—History, Economic Planning, and Dictatorship

of the Proletariat—are the metaphysical strumpets of the Soviet exploiters.

We need only find out who profits from the causes to be convinced of their demagogic character. If it were true that totalitarians forget all personal interests when they serve a Supreme Cause, at least they would be true to the ethic of sacrifice they teach their people. But if we track them to their dens, we see that for them the cult of the Supreme Goal is much more an opportunity to enjoy public prominence than to dedicate themselves. If we compare the politician who busies himself with his daily affairs and the totalitarian who claims to be consumed by the flame of destiny, which of the two imposes himself more upon us, which one harasses us more, which one harms us more? Behind the pure torch of Supreme Causes, the Supreme Leader—that frog who puffs up at the breath of History—makes his sordid deals. That is why even those who might be tempted to approve the sacrifice of men to causes should never entrust such a program to a dictator, because the dictator will always hasten to sacrifice the cause to himself.

PSYCHOANALYSIS OF TRANSCENDENT CAUSES: THE RETURN TO THE CLOSED TRIBE

For the totalitarian, the principal attraction of transcendent causes is that at one stroke they absorb his personality and fix his duties forever. They are imposing enough to allow him to be convinced, without seeming too naïve, that they have an answer for everything. They shine so brightly that he is made brilliant by reflection and no longer needs to depend upon his own talents. Able to live only in a mass but wanting to feel his amoeba-like condition as a state of grace, his only recourse is to deify

the bond that binds him to his own kind, and that thus becomes their Sacred Cause.

With this essentially anti-intellectual mechanism of elevating oneself by belonging to a whole, no personal effort is necessary. It is enough for the whole to be sublime and for the adherence to be automatic. The theory of transcendent causes strives to satisfy the first condition, as heredity does the second. This explains the ease with which totalitarians can make the masses vibrate by plucking the strings of patriotism and historicism: the Nation is the poor man's fortune, and History the science of the ingenuous. To partake of their luster, one need only be born, for everyone has a native soil and everyone has a future. To totalitarians, Jews, who are from nowhere, and politicians, who are going nowhere, are contemptible.

Once the totalitarian decides to advance by means of what has been given to him, and not by what he gives, it is natural for him to assure himself that it could not have been otherwise. He feels that the treasure that enriches him is as much a part of him as his ears, that he is an integral part of the mass to which he is bound by that most irrevocable tie: blood. This leads to his offering himself as a sacrifice to Moloch, since shedding his blood will confirm the irrevocability of the bond. No one will be able to deny that this Nation was really his or that History was on his side if he dies for them. "Give me your life, and I will lend you my luster"—such is the totalitarian pact between the whole and the amoeba. The democratic pact is its antithesis: "Lend me your luster," says the group to the individual, "and I will protect your life."

By uniting its subjects through a mystical rather than a rational approach, by obtaining from them the sacred pledge of their blood, the cult of transcendent causes reveals that its deepest function is to revive forms of life

and thought that mankind knew for thousands of years in the setting Popper calls "the closed tribe" (of which Sparta was the perfect example), in contrast to the open society established by democracy. The cult of transcendent causes in the closed totalitarian tribes of the twentieth century is only the continuation, in modern form, of the totemic cult that held together the closed tribes of the past.

Since the cult of History is based on conjecture to a greater degree than is the cult of the Nation, it has been careful, in order to give itself more substance, to establish a secular, militant order: the Party—a totalitarian party, of course, with indisputable commands, implacable discipline, unutterable prestige—an entity not shaped by men but one which itself shapes men so that they owe it loyalty, love, life, as they do to the Nation. One assumes this sort of party more than one joins it; one dissolves in it more than one develops in it. Totalitarians wear their party as soldiers put on a uniform. They become inflamed at meetings, like soldiers on the eve of battle; they die for the party emblem, as a soldier dies for the flag. In the party the totalitarians try to reproduce the archetype of the closed tribe even more strictly than they do in the Nation. In our day, those who seek to do so can live their whole lives within the party without being reached by any call from the outside world. In comparison with the magic spell of the Nation, the innovation is that the party member invokes progressive ideologies and finds the unifying mystique in doctrines rather than in blood and soil—a sheer concession to the fashion of the century. But since this bond, borrowed from a more rational order, is more exposed to the corrosive action of the mind, it must be protected by an even more rigid armor of fanaticism, whose underlying function can now be understood. Fanaticism serves to make ideas pass, without loss of prestige,

from the jurisdiction of the mind to that of the blood. In this way it provides the modern closed tribe with a bond that appears to be more philosophical but is essentially as zoological as that of the ancestral closed tribe.

IDOLS OR IDEALS

One must not conclude, from what has been said, that to remain a good democrat one must not think of high or distant objectives. Freedom, justice, brotherhood, and tolerance, which are democratic values, have nothing commonplace about them and are not, alas, within easy reach. If the democrat places such high value on the freedom to choose among the roads that are open to him, it is because he attaches so much importance to what he will find at the end of those roads. It would be false to identify the democratic spirit with a narrow and prosaic attitude that seeks only immediate satisfactions and derides all disinterested speculation. It would be equally false to believe that because it rejects human sacrifices on the altar of Moloch, the democratic spirit rejects all altruism; or that because it is opposed to the complete absorption of the individual in the group, it releases the individual from the duty of loyalty toward his fellows.

It is natural that the totalitarians should draw these prejudiced conclusions, for, since they are unable to feel sure of themselves except in extreme positions, they conclude that anyone who questions their total discipline is advocating total dissoluteness, and that anyone who doubts the infallibility of long-term planning favors anarchy in daily living.

But calmer minds should understand that this is a question of degree. Everyone will recognize that ten gunshots make a skirmish, and ten thousand a revolution. By the

same token, a certain degree of foresight and solidarity promote a harmonious society, while extravagant speculations about the future and cruel sacrifices make for barbarity.

The democrat, because he believes in the worth of the individual, does not consider man an omnipotent and omniscient god. It is another example of totalitarian thought not to be able to respect a being without attributing to him the absolute of perfection. The democrat is conscious of the weaknesses and limitations that impel men to seek the comforting warmth of their fellows and the protection of institutions. Therefore he approves of man's love for a group and of his desire for progress. But he also knows that if that love and that desire are not to turn into idolatry—which would at once react against the group and against progress—they must remain on a human scale and be expressed by free and deliberate choice.

Certainly, devotion to a cause is a great virtue, but if it has been instilled by a hypnotizer in order to make you serve his interests, it is degraded to servility. The democrat does not deny that the individual has duties toward the group, but he asserts that the group also has duties toward the individual. Democracy has even more need of civic spirit than has a dictatorial regime, in which obedience alone is required. But the citizen, instead of an idealist, becomes a slave if he is not on guard to see that the objectives he seeks remain those he desires. The very fact that a cause is served blindly and fanatically deprives it of all its greatness and debases it to the level of a totem.

It is therefore perfectly compatible with the democratic spirit to formulate and advocate views about the kind of society one would like to see develop. Thus, socialism is not guilty of totemism simply because it advocates a classless society and the collectivization of the means of produc-

tion (even if they are never to be realized). But to avoid falling into the "historicist" demagogy, socialism must specify the means it intends to use as well as their immediate consequences, so that the men whom it calls upon to forge the new society may know exactly to what they are committing themselves and consciously accept the destiny that is offered them. Finally, socialism must admit the possibility of revising these objectives, however noble they may appear, if the process of putting them into operation proves too painful.

Happiness and freedom are not like other causes. They are not the symbols of satisfactions: they are the satisfactions themselves, which adhere to the ephemeral being, which are born, live, and die with each man. If happiness and freedom are the objectives of collective ventures, they are the best guarantees that wisdom will be exercised. As long as these goals are kept in sight, there is no danger that ideals will degenerate into dogmas, enthusiasms into aggressions, strivings into massacres, achievements into masquerades, or generations of men into holocausts. In the light of these goals, plans remain generous, intelligible, and flexible—in a word, human.

Freedom is not an end in itself, but a *means* of advancing. Its highest value rests on the fact it is a tool, not an achievement. In a sense, its value is negative, so those of elementary intelligence find it more difficult to appreciate its worth. The importance we give it is determined by the limitations of our minds, which, though unable to light up the whole cosmos, provide our only illumination along the narrow path, among a thousand pitfalls. The human adventure consists in taking the path, with all its dangers. But if our undertaking is not to be sheer madness, we must make sure we have enough leeway so that we can react to unforeseen perils without being checked by rules

fixed in advance and by an absolute philosophy—even if such rules and philosophy are based on the best of intentions. Freedom is simply this latitude, the essential condition for moving over the craggy terrain of our world. It guarantees the possibility of adjusting to the unknown. Without it, our advance must inevitably end at the bottom of an abyss, as indeed it does under all dictatorships.

Thus democracy proscribes idols, not ideals. For the superstitious self-sacrifice of humanity on the altars of nebulous causes, democracy tries to substitute the rational self-determination of society for the benefit of flesh-and-blood citizens. For the ineffable and absolute character of totalitarian ends, it tries to substitute its own experimental and concrete processes, which are the very processes of thought and life.

7

Marxist criticism of bourgeois democracy

We have seen that little is left of the totalitarians' sharp accusations. It is not true that democracy inevitably leads to weakness, stagnation, corruption, or discord. Can it then be said that it automatically produces strength, progress, integrity, and union? It would be naïve to assume so.

After showing that the totalitarians' accusations against democracy are false and ill-intentioned, it is only fair to admit that democracy, as the modern world has seen it in operation thus far, still has serious defects. But there is no need to cast envious glances at despotism in order to see these defects clearly; there is no need, in order to reveal shortcomings in liberty, to abase oneself before the precepts of tyranny. The occasional justified criticisms in the mass of totalitarian accusations, as well as many others they curiously ignore, have already been formulated by numerous scholars, in terms of a coherent doctrine and with an end to humanitarian solutions.

POLITICAL DEMOCRACY WITHOUT SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IS A DELUSION

One of the criticisms directed at modern democracy that has made the greatest impression upon public opinion is

one very dear to the Marxists. According to them, the regime operating under the democratic label in many countries since the beginning of the nineteenth century has never been more than a compromise—one imposed on the bourgeoisie by pressure from the workers—between progressive thrusts and conservative resistance, between the claims of justice and the formulas of order, between political liberties won bit by bit and economic privileges defended cent by cent.

To be sure, the Marxist grants that in this compromise the bourgeoisie has yielded a little of its political supremacy by giving the disinherited classes a certain sphere of influence, especially in the electoral sphere, but it has nevertheless continued to be the dominant class on the economic level. Marx teaches that the real power of a social class depends more on the power it exerts on the lower economic levels of society than on the rights it enjoys in the upper political levels. Although the same ballot is put into the calloused hands of the proletariat and the white hands of the bourgeoisie, the latter, by using its economic privileges, exercises much more influence over the state than the proletariat does. Ten thousand workers voting in an election to choose representatives have less political power than a single banker who frequents the expensive restaurants in which cabinet members dine. So long as the economic power of the employer over the wage earner continues, bourgeois democracy, which appears, in the text of its laws, to give the same powers and opportunities to all citizens, does not in reality do so.

It is simple to recognize the influence of economic trumps in the political game, and the criticism that gold subjugates liberty was made by Marat and Saint-Just before Marx, and by Demosthenes and Cicero before Marat. How can a society live politically free and economically

enslaved? By what miracle can it function as an academy in its discussions and as a jungle in its business dealings? Is it not a contradiction to think that honest ministers can govern it while greedy financiers supply it? If parliamentary circles are sometimes corruptible, it is because money—the goal and the motive force of bourgeois economy—can still exert its power and lure on everyone. If it is still so easy to deceive the people, it is because the media of expression are commercial. Thus, the rich can buy up newspapers, which they use to carry on clever propaganda for their own interests, while the poor can only read them. If cruelty remains deep-rooted under the surface of social decorum, it is because the struggle for life is harsh and offers no alternative to the individual but to deceive and exploit his fellows.

In short, in capitalism liberty has been atrophied by the material dependence of workers on owners, political equality has been circumvented by economic inequality, and fraternity has been blighted by competition. The three key principles of political democracy have thus been poisoned by material privileges. This is the thesis of revolutionary socialism.

THE EXPLOITATION OF MARXIST CRITICISM BY ENEMIES OF DEMOCRACY

The Marxists present the gloomy picture that every effort toward political justice is doomed to failure until social justice, so much more difficult to attain, shall be realized. Before investigating the truth of this picture, it is important to be forearmed against two attitudes that are as fallacious as they are selfish: the attitude of Western totalitarians, who refuse to see that the real defects of bourgeois democracy arise from economic injustice; and

that of Asiatic totalitarians, who take undue advantage of these defects to discredit freedom.

It is revealing that this picture of the defects of democracy never appears in the accusations of the Western fascists—that their criticism stops at the very point where analysis might highlight the capitalistic origin of the faults they have denounced, and that they are quicker to stigmatize corrupt parliamentarians than corrupting capitalists. It is revealing that they stir up workers over dishonesty of government officials, but become vague on the question of exploitation by the whole social system. This tendency to pursue political magpies while sparing the economic wolves shows once again the accusers' duplicity. The fascists limit themselves to shouting to the people that they are being deceived, but never say a word about the means that might keep them from being deceived—about the vital problem of bringing well-being, liberty, and culture to the poor man. This strange omission reveals that the fascists are not trying to cure bourgeois democracy of its ailments, but simply to reinforce the privileges that are fading away and to strengthen the machinery of oppression. Since they cannot acknowledge their purpose, they pursue it treacherously: by assigning to democracy faults attributable to capitalist exploitation, they make the people disgusted with democracy rather than with the exploitation.

While the Western fascists emphasize the faults of democracy in order to conceal the responsibilities of capitalism, their Asiatic colleagues, commonly called Communists, emphasize the role of capitalism in order to damn democracy. Starting with the premise that liberty has been violated by money, they insidiously extend to liberty the blame that should be attached only to money. They are so bitter in their efforts to prove that liberty is only a

mockery on the lips of the bourgeoisie that in the end they will find it rotten on their own. Modern history perhaps knows no more pernicious action than that of the "iron Marxists" who scorn justice under the pretext that the ruling class tampers with justice for its own profit. We all know their jokes about the fine words with which the people are lulled to sleep: "Freedom for the people," they say, "is freedom to sleep under the bridges." The more they pose as emancipated spirits, who cannot be deceived, the more they contribute to dishonoring those higher principles that the "oppressors," at least, respect enough to circumvent only by intrigue. Our emancipated spirits thus reveal that what they really aspire to is to become oppressors in their turn.

But the genuine socialist criticism, far from being hostile to liberty, actually attaches to it a crucial importance. The tenacious thorns of the domination of man over man, planted in time immemorial and fertilized by money, make the road to liberty difficult and often disappointing. "Root out the thorns," says the true progressive to the anxious pilgrim. "Give up the journey," whispers the Communist as he multiplies difficulties to make the road impassible. That he dares only whisper is another revealing fact. The democratic ideal has now so strong a hold on all minds, shows itself so superior to all the old formulas of absolutism, that the Communists, not daring to make a frontal attack, are reduced to setting an ambush for it, camouflaged with the very colors they detest.

We must not be surprised if the attachment of socialism to liberty is so great that socialism must use it as a scale for measuring all regimes. Unlike the monstrosity that Stalinism has finally created, socialism cannot exist without democracy. One sees too often in socialism merely an economic formula consisting of the transfer of property

from private ownership to collectivity. A doctrine that once contained a whole humanist program has thus been degraded to a sort of real-estate operation. But even in this purely economic form, socialism still remains inconceivable without political democracy.

Democracy means power of the people. Socialism means the people as owners. While it is absurd to state, according to Marxist views, that the people can hold any substantial portion of power when they do not actually control property, it is still more absurd to think, according to simple good sense, they can hold any substantial portion of property if they have no power. Possession of the tools of production carries with it the prerogative of disposing of them, of deciding on their use, their distribution, of appointing and discharging the men who run them. If it is the people as a whole, anonymous and scattered, who are to exercise this power, and not private owners, the people must necessarily employ an agency of management—a government. Then what does it mean for the people to be termed "owners" of the means of production if they have no voice in the policy of this government, if they have no opportunity to discuss, to dissent, to approve or dismiss the managers, if they do not have the independence and security of a board of directors conferring on the conduct of their enterprise? The socialization of property without political democracy is a much more blatant fraud than political democracy without social justice.

Furthermore, in a regime with a socialist economy, in which the profit motive and the risks of the entrepreneur have disappeared, the only means remaining to stimulate and regulate economic activity are the enlightened regard for the tastes and needs of the public, the open comparison of projects, the free discussion of results—all of which necessitate the full play of political democracy. The na-

tionalization of industry by a dictatorial state is not only the antithesis of socialism but even of simple economic rationality, as is proved by the Soviet experiment, which dictatorship has reduced to a mixture of inhuman exploitation and insane recklessness. Thus, in even the strictest economic interpretation, in a socialist economy political democracy is at one and the same time a sign of authenticity and a requisite for efficiency. And it is a very sad indication of the perversion suffered by ideas in contact with communism that, in order to be distinguished from it, socialism must today flaunt the term "democratic" —as if real socialism could be anything but democratic.

THE ANSWER TO MARXIST CRITICISM

Let us now turn to those critics who in good faith assert that political democracy without social democracy is a delusion, but who do not use this argument, as the Communists do, to try to discredit democracy entirely. We shall see whether this argument is valid. The problem is important, for it is this idea that still impels many socialists to believe that taking any part in government is vain and dishonorable as long as the capitalist economy has not been destroyed. Their intransigence in this respect is extremely dangerous, because communism depends on it to block all progress in the bourgeois democracies.

History has weakened this criticism. No one today can truthfully assert that, in the bourgeois democracies, political parties, unions, or workers' associations are stultified by a plot of the financial interests. In France workers are rarely dismissed because of subversive opinions; on the contrary, employee delegates have freedom to spread subversive ideas during working hours. Universities, motion picture studios, and publishers no longer boycott *avant-*

garde ideologists—they frequently woo them—and in the intellectual world certain rebellious attitudes have become so fashionable that they have become almost conventional. Elections are carried on in perfect safety for all parties, and even in the tiniest villages, town halls, community centers, and schools offer impoverished groups free rooms where they may hold their meetings. The information media doubtless leave something to be desired when it comes to exactness, but they are equally available to all parties. Finally, to the slight degree that class prejudice still exists, far from operating against the proletariat, it operates in its favor; thus politicians, sometimes uncomfortable because they were born in easy circumstances, at the earliest opportunity hasten to emphasize their descent from plain people or their difficult beginnings. Whereas the wealthy and the powerful are villified in hundreds of books or films, we cannot think of a single work in which workers are scorned. It would be descending to demagoguery not to recognize that at the present time in the capitalist circles in France, England, and the United States, most men live by democratic principles; their sincere faith in these principles, even though not completely free from temptations of partiality or favoritism, is fully as great as the sincerity found in the ranks of the labor parties. It may even be said that today it is frequently easier for a labor union to protest to a cabinet minister than for a factory owner to do so.

The bourgeoisie has not accepted this equality without resistance. Indeed, it has done everything it could to double its material benefits by political privileges, and it is not without sacrifice that the less fortunate classes have succeeded in winning their civic freedom. Those who today rejoice in this freedom should not fail to pay homage to the legions of obscure workers and intellectuals who,

in factory districts, in parliaments, and in prisons made their memorable contributions to the cause of liberty. It is you, sans-culottes of Valmy, silk weavers of Lyon, students at the barricades of the July Revolution, Carbonari of Milan, Chartists of Cardiff, companions of the June Days, weavers of Silesia, Communards of Paris, who achieved this simple and yet overwhelming victory: the right of everyone to speak in the political arena, irrespective of birth or wealth.

But while the effort to achieve political equality must never be forgotten, it is only fair to recognize that today this equality is no longer seriously threatened by monied interests. There has even developed in many a bourgeois a fondness for political liberties, including the liberties of labor, that might well set an example for more than one revolutionist whose messianic concept often does not embrace respect for the individual (including the laborer). Representatives of the capitalist regimes, such as Churchill, Roosevelt, De Gaulle, Van Zeeland, are, after all, the men who led the unrelenting fight against those fascists and Nazis whose chief claim to fame was having checked off labor organizations; it is they who set up at Nuremberg the first tribunal in history to judge totalitarianism as a crime. To assert that the government of such men seriously endangers civic liberties is an unfair exaggeration that has its source, for some, in a deliberate propaganda lie; for others, in a fixation on an utterly outdated concept. Such extremists, taking for granted the advantages they no longer have to fight for, are incensed by the inadequacies of democracy, forgetting that it is the basis of their daily life.

Bourgeois democracy still allows many abuses to persist. One of the most important of these is the venality of the press. It is useless to repeat here a criticism that has been

made a hundred times. I shall merely observe that it is on this basis that Marxism retains the widest audience, for it is in this field that the monied interests continue to benefit most spectacularly. To be sure, the poorer political parties have finally found the means to maintain newspapers that provide a vehicle of expression, but beyond that minimum there is a superfluity that only the rich can afford and that, in our age of super-propaganda, weighs heavily in public contests and constitutes a serious flaw in political democracy.

However, this objection must be qualified in several respects. The first is that this power of the rich to increase their influence unduly favors not only the capitalist class but also, and perhaps even more, a party that claims to represent the working class: the Communist party. For in many countries it is this party that behaves like a Croesus; it is this party that is the most lavish with printed matter, far outdoing the bourgeois parties. Such an avalanche of political literature has never been seen, and it has been calculated that the mere printing of the French Communist party's newspapers, pamphlets, posters, tracts, and fliers costs it ten million dollars a year. Even Hitler's rise to power in Germany, drenched as it was with the gold of the big manufacturers, actually assumes in retrospect the appearance of a petty enterprise compared with the excesses of today's Soviet propaganda. This observation does not in any sense lessen the validity of the criticism that may be directed at a regime that allows its newspapers to go to the highest bidder. On the contrary, it heightens it with an example as new as it is unexpected, and shows that we must bear in mind that the money that hampers the operation of democracy is no longer only in capitalist pockets.

The second point is that the public has been so alerted

against a venal press that—except for the public that follows the Communist press and hence enjoys a particularly innocent blindness—a sizable body of readers no longer allows itself to be deceived by the so-called independent opinions expressed by certain newspapers. Thus, people in the United States read the Hearst press, which dragged Roosevelt in the mud, but still voted for Roosevelt.

Finally, a third point: the multiplicity of opinions in the press considerably weakens the ill effects of the venality charged against it. Not all papers tell the same lie on the same subject at the same time, and the truth that breaks through in one weakens the lie that appears in another. Indeed, that is why dictatorship, which also has a venal press, finds it necessary to augment the power conferred by money with the power given by censorship. It can survive only with a press that is at once sold, gagged, and standardized.

On the whole, although bourgeois democracy has faults which one must work incessantly to eliminate, these faults are not serious enough to warrant rejecting democracy completely, like an empty shell. The Marxists recognized this fact during the German occupation of France. What value and virtues they then ascribed to those political liberties they had delighted in denouncing as hypocritical when they had been able to enjoy them! In fact, what has already been won is so appreciable that we must from now on continue the struggle for what is still to be gained, in a spirit quite different from that of our ancestors, who started with nothing. Skepticism and mockery about the lack of marrow in the democratic bone is no longer justified, for the marrow is there. It is our fathers who put it there, and it is our duty to render it constantly more substantial.

It would be astonishing, moreover, if such determined

efforts to improve the effectiveness of democracy produced no results. If newspapers, posters, and pamphlets brought the working class no advantages whatsoever, as the extremists among the socialists assert, why would these extremists have drawn so heavily on the pocketbooks of the poor to turn out this profusion of useless paper? Why would they have spent a hundred years mobilizing workers to win the right to vote if voting has no significance? Were all the socialist and Communist deputies brought into parliament at the cost of so many sacrifices merely to be puppets? Were all the laws achieved with such difficulty merely to be jests? Such great effort, and to bring about no change in the age-old domination of money in the game of politics? How unlikely this is! And what an indictment it would be for the ideological mountain to have brought forth this practical mouse! For if, after a century of tremendous struggle carried on by socialism for the supremacy of democracy, democracy continued to remain a fraud, then socialism would have been nothing but a delusion.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE POLITICAL

The Marxist theory—according to which the political superstructure is merely a reflection of the economic substructure, from which it followed that the state could never be other than an instrument in the service of the ruling economic system and the class benefitting from it—has been refuted in our day. The refutation of this theory, however, does not make unworthy those who had formulated it. In Marx's time, the political superstructure of society was still light enough to function as a simple appendage to the economic foundation; and without too much artifice one could have depicted the relations of one to the other in three steps: industrial barons desire, political managers interpret, government clerks perform.

This Marxist satire was oversimplified even in its own time, and Marx himself admitted that some political managers and many government clerks tended to use the state for their personal ambitions, rather than in the interests of the industrial barons. Thus it has been in all periods of history. But the Marxist satire has become a caricature since the political apparatus, under different influences—of which the Marxist one was not the least—has become so heavy as to tip the scales and become the dominant element. Marx could think that he who holds the stomach holds the brain: in his day, among the masses the stomach posed all the problems and the brain expressed few ambitions. In our time the relation is inverted: he who holds the brain holds the stomach.

There is nothing suspect in this, as we might be led to believe by the economic determinists who do not feel "scientific" until they have reduced all human aspirations to the black and white charts of statistics. If democracy tends to give the man who thinks more influence than the man who labors, it is only anticipating the consummation desired by Marx: that of raising humanity from the sphere of necessity (where it blindly submits to economic laws) to the sphere of liberty (where it can consciously shape its own destiny). The supremacy of the political over the economic expresses, in short, the logical priority of will over action, of desire over enterprise, so that it is a sign of progress—and one quite in conformity with materialistic philosophy—that the fate of man henceforth depends upon political institutions rather than upon the possession of property.

Several systems of economic administration (including statism) succeeded one another after World War I without affecting the fate of the poor, which on the contrary was seriously upset by political changes. The autarchy in Germany, the abolition of private employers in Russia, the

nationalization of key industries in England—these were indeed new economic settings for the album of history, but within these settings Franz Neumann, Ivan Ivanovich, and John Smith continued to live more or less as in the past. On the other hand, all the political phenomena presented by totalitarianism, chauvinism, and doctrinal fanaticism of the twentieth century brought about drastic upheavals in the lives of peoples: a concentration-camp world, the reappearance of the social class of slaves, mass migrations, wars, invasions, and famines.

The experiment of nationalization, in the Soviet Union as in capitalist countries, shows that the important factor today in the lives of workers is the administration of enterprises—a political factor—rather than their ownership—an economic factor. The influence of the workers on their own standard of living and on the policies of their enterprises is absolutely nonexistent in the Soviet Union where private ownership has been eliminated, whereas it is steadily increasing in the West, where factories continue to belong to private owners. The efforts of labor unions have succeeded in improving the material welfare of workers because they were preceded and accompanied by a political movement capable of obtaining for labor the right to organize and to strike and to transform its grievances into laws. Vacations with pay, social security, and that nameless but most precious of all reforms, the employer's respect for the worker, have been introduced as a result of political action in most of the countries having private ownership, but they have remained inoperative in the Soviet regime, with its collective ownership.

It may be said, then, that progress has finally been achieved on the most abstract levels, ideological and moral. Direct action has, to be sure, served as muscle and nerves for ideas, but these ideas still had to be born and to ferment in people's consciences until they became self-evi-

dent. A social need is fulfilled only after it has become a moral imperative. But the moving spirit of all these efforts throughout the years—corporative, ideological, and moral—has always been the right to think, to write, to speak. On the day the workers succeeded in making their demands public, the reforms were virtually won. But the publication of demands, however material they may be, depends entirely upon political power.

In our day, moreover, economic struggles no longer even await maturity before they are played out on the political stage; they come on at the beginning of the first act. No sooner does a conflict arise in a certain industry than its eddies are seen to affect highest political circles. It is not by chance that today the humblest needs so quickly become affairs of state. One reason for this phenomenon doubtless lies in modern techniques, which multipy the connections between the different sectors of production and consumption so that they form only a single tissue, at once muscular and nervous, no fiber of which can any longer move without a reaction from all the others or without everything that happens passing through the gigantic brain of societies known as politics.

But another reason why economic and social problems become political derives from the pressure exerted in this direction by the very scorners of politics. By subjecting more and more spheres of activity to the primacy of the public will, by swelling the role of statist laws, regulations, and interventions—to the detriment of the sector in which competition and resourcefulness reigned—Marxists have contributed to displacing real power from the owners of capital to the owners of the masses: in the democracies, the great masters of opinion; in totalitarian regimes, the great masters. This is why those who own have always felt that their most dangerous rivals were those who speak. In the twentieth century, under the influence of the very

parties that claimed they were concerned only with the "substructure," we have gradually passed from the era of *capitalism* to the era of *politism*.

The Communists, who pretend to protest against this priority given to politics, in the name of "historical, materialist" laws, are the very ones who pander to it most shamelessly. In all history there have been no more fanatical agitators of passions, citers of doctrines, and exploiters of ideals than these so-called economic determinists. Their first and almost only business in the world is not in any sense to relieve the poor, but to climb on the machine that controls public opinion, regarding social conflict as only one part of the whole political stratagem. If they pretend to aspire above everything to planning and collectivization, they do so to exploit politically the hopes that these formulas have aroused for a hundred years in the hearts of the poor, and because economic systems so based are easier to subject to the complete control of political power. They have understood so perfectly that politics is the keystone of society that their greatest attention is always and everywhere reserved for newspapers, for committees, meetings, secret agents, and parties.

It is therefore for true progressives, who must defend civilization inch by inch, to attack their armor at the very point where they strike at us: the political point. If we fall in step behind them in granting priority to nationalization, social security, and vacations, we become victims of their Machiavellianism. Since their attack is above all political, we must oppose them with a front that is above all political. Since their conspiracy tends first of all toward dictatorship, our defense must concentrate first of all on liberty.

One last reason for not giving in to Soviet demagogy and for giving priority to political reforms is that the consequences of political reform are more easily foreseen than

those of economic innovation. The attempts at a planned economy, which Europe has witnessed in recent decades, and whose value is still open to discussion, have at least revealed this indisputable fact: that the rational conduct of the economy is a much more difficult affair than it appeared to be a hundred years ago, in the enthusiasm of theoretical concepts. Then, everything seemed clear, luminous, and fertile. Then, one simply said: Instead of letting the economy develop haphazardly at the whim of a thirst for profit, we have only to plan it, to rationalize it, to collectivize it, we have only to . . . Alas, they had forgotten that in rational economy there is reason, and in reason there is knowledge. Which means that in order to plan an economy, a knowledge of economics is requisite.

Our knowledge in this field is as rudimentary as the field is complex. Auguste Comte had already pointed out that social sciences would be the last to be understood, for one must first master the other sciences, and especially the most complex of all, the science of man—man being the only possible foundation of a rational economy, since man is at once its motor, its wheels, and its final destination. To claim, with our present knowledge, to arrive at a scientific solution of the problems of production, distribution, finance, labor, and education, to try with our feeble information to govern aspirations, tastes, capacities, wills, is to rush into an equation of the thousandth degree armed only with the Pythagorean table. How many decades will it take for simply psychotechnical research to furnish more or less sure criteria merely to guide us in the allocation of responsibilities—the key operation on which all the rest depends, and which today can be entrusted, in the so-called planned economies as well as in anarchical economies, only to the risky intuitions of a few individuals at best, and to intrigue at worst?

When, on the threshold of modern times, science tested

its wings, having as yet solved almost none of the enigmas nature propounded, its first concern was to secure for itself, against the principle of authority inherited from the Middle Ages, the right to question everything, to comment on everything, to deduce everything. Its great founders—Roger Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, Harvey, Descartes—knew that once these prerogatives were acquired, knowledge would inevitably follow. The counterpart, in human affairs, to the scholar's freedom to look into nature is the basic right that men must keep for themselves, the right to control their government—that is, political democracy. It is the Ariadne's thread that permits humanity to find its way in the labyrinth of economic phenomena and human passions. If it is secured, well-being will follow as inevitably as heat comes from flame. If, on the contrary, well-being alone is sought and liberty despised, there will be neither liberty nor well-being. Political emancipation is the guaranty of economic emancipation. That is why we say politics comes first, which is equivalent to saying man comes first. For the best means of defending the poor is to defend man.

WHY DO THEY PREFER M.V.D. DISCIPLINE TO ACCEPTING DEMOCRACY?

Why is this obvious fact—that capitalism has finally accepted, willy-nilly, the essential rules of political democracy—so fiercely denied by extremist socialists? If they were content only to be blind! But in addition they must bring grist to the mill of their worst enemy, Soviet totalitarianism, discredit their own heritage (since we have seen that it is their forerunners who won these liberties), and in the end run the risk of being engulfed in the reactionary tide. For the privileged classes will finally say to themselves that it is stupid of them to accept the fetters of political democ-

racy if its very beneficiaries see nothing in it but deception. Instead of enjoying their past victories and perfecting them, why do those who worked for political democracy turn their backs on it so bitterly?

The fact is that there is no one more conservative in his convictions than a man who preaches disruption in institutions. In trying to overturn things, he expends the energy each man ordinarily needs to correct his judgments. Having had to make an exceptional effort in the past to throw off the yoke of political prejudices, he is then entrapped for life by the first subversive vision he meets. But the most profound reason that impels the extremists to deny the existence of democracy in a bourgeois regime is that the mere recognition of it would render the revolutionary doctrine void. The romantic appeal of bloody revolutions still holds a powerful attraction, but the bloodshed must have a justification. Now, this justification is only possible when reform methods are declared impossible, when it is asserted that all progress is paralyzed by secret egotisms that pull the strings and block the exits. But if, on the contrary, political democracy can exist in a bourgeois regime, if the discoveries of thought may be told, if what is told may be debated, if what is debated may be achieved—in short, if the exits are not blocked—then there is no longer any reason to use dynamite. It must, therefore, be admitted—in good company, as a matter of fact, since Marx and Engels acknowledged it in a famous text—that political democracy leads to setting up the economy of a revolution, so that to admit the existence of one is to renounce the other.

Add to that the most valuable weapon in political struggles—a wicked enemy. The extremists scarcely like to see a change of heart in the enemy they have once selected and to whose denunciation they owe so much. And since the achievements of political democracy, although indisput-

able, remain as far from perfection as any other human endeavor, there is nothing easier than to find weak spots in them, to magnify them, to make them into an indictment of the whole regime, and to conclude, to the applause of the public that is so fond of extreme statements: "We are really living under a dictatorship." Whereupon the orators as well as their audiences disperse under the benevolent eye of the police, and the papers print their inflammatory speeches alongside the latest diatribes against the "oppressive" government. Yet these facts, which would be inconceivable if our extremists were really "living in a dictatorship," and these hundreds of prerogatives that they exercise daily without even realizing them, count for nothing with them.

In continuing their systematic denunciation of every reform, our socialist extremists also benefit from other advantages: they assume the air of shrewd realists and purists, whereas those who declare themselves satisfied with partial progress always appear naïve and opportunistic. If they continue to attack the bourgeois democracy that allows them to live, rather than the collectivist despotism that puts them to death, it is essentially to prove to themselves that they do not compromise. Like the flagellant friars, they prefer punishing themselves with M.V.D. discipline for life, rather than giving in for a moment to satanic democracy.

We may justifiably wonder whether the prejudice of so many socialists against bourgeois democracy is not due to a fixation on the romantic appeal of revolutionary slogans, for in other respects these same socialists scarcely believe any longer in the effectiveness of disruption. But though they no longer seriously seek to substitute machine guns for ballots, they have kept something of the old revolutionary psychosis, something at once perfidious and precious: the subversive spirit. It is because they are familiar

with the passiveness of the poor and know that without the subversive spirit there would be no more socialism that so many of them are determined there should be no democracy. A precious inspiration, we have said, since political democracy still calls for many reforms; and these, tomorrow as well as yesterday, will require enthusiasm and sacrifice. In addition, though public liberties are indispensable for the health of the community, they no longer suffice for the happiness of the individual. Bourgeois democracy is an infinitely important achievement in the face of totalitarianism, but a crude one in the face of justice, and history is not through with man on that score. One has only to look about to see that evil has not disappeared. One man, whose only virtue is his father's pocketbook (or his neighbor's), tramples on the back of another, deadened by pain and poverty; the struggle for life debases men: in politics, as in coinage, the bad drives out the good, and egotism and stupidity still strut in the first-tier boxes. If, in the face of the distress and iniquity that remain, no sparks of revolt were seen any longer (because it was thought that the victims have complete freedom to complain) then this very freedom would quickly be taken away.

It is, therefore, perhaps just for men to remain subversive, but that is no reason for them to become blind. Or—when confronted by the depths of horror into which those regimes sink that banish liberty—to persist in not admitting that liberties are more precious than a mere reorganization of the property system. A person has never sincerely felt for man who does not understand instinctively that Buchenwald and Karatanga are the major phenomena of our time, a hundred times more serious and fraught with evil consequences than private ownership of means of production and exchange.

8

Examination of the conservatives' criticism of democracy

DEMOCRACY IS A DELUSION BECAUSE THE PEOPLE ARE IGNORANT

According to the conservatives' criticism, the democratic method, which subjects the government to the opinions of the governed, is ineffective because the governed are incapable of forming opinions about public affairs or of motivating and controlling power. It is obvious that popular sovereignty is a difficult art demanding more and more extensive knowledge and a more and more agile intelligence, for society is steadily becoming more complex, and the simplest actions are followed by a host of increasingly serious consequences. Broad knowledge is needed to choose the right administrators and solutions, and it is obvious that the people's knowledge is far from adequate.

For centuries this was the first objection (and the last as well, so sufficient did it appear) that was made against democracy. Many of the best minds, and even those who wished the people only good, like Diderot, thought it incongruous that the people should be consulted. Plato

wrote: "All philosophers testify to the folly of the crowd —it is not natural that the competent navigator should have to beg ignorant sailors to accept his orders." Heraclitus of Ephesus, who was free of personal ambition, since he had renounced the priestly throne in favor of his brother, warned his compatriots who were inclined toward democracy: "You will hang each other to the last man. . . . You are going to abandon the city to the mercy of children."

Children indeed they must have seemed, these common people, to the nobles and bourgeois, who alone, through the long centuries of feudalism and monarchy, had the privilege of dealing with public problems. What would happen to the world if adults were to follow the wishes of children? Even reformers like Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau, the revolutionists of 1789, the "radicals" of Jeremy Bentham, all of whom had advanced so far as to challenge the principle of sovereignty by divine right (Diderot wrote: "No man has received from nature the right to govern another") and who wanted to found power upon general consent, upon a social contract, never imagined that it would be the people as a whole, those ant heaps, the obscure, formless people, who should give this consent and sign this contract. They envisaged conferring this role on an educated proprietary social class—large, to be sure, by comparison with the restricted circle of the prince and his court, but limited by comparison with the whole population. The idea that, in the last analysis, it must be the anthills that decide, was conceived only very recently, and the camp known in politics as "the right" is characterized by the fact that it continues to reject this idea as foolish and demagogic.

This refusal to admit the legitimacy of popular desires has long since established an affinity between the right and

fascism. In the beginning the fascists appeared, as a matter of fact, as the shock troops of the conservatives, but Stalin proved that fascism can recruit its troops from the left as well as from the right. The difference between the classical right and totalitarianism then appeared more clearly. Henceforth we may apply the term "right" to the camp that wants neither submission to the people nor submission to a dictator. It advocates as ideal an organization of power based on electoral qualifications. The forms of these qualifications are numerous, but they all have this in common: restriction of the supreme direction of public affairs to that part of the population distinguished by having the right to vote—a right based on some such qualification as nobility, land ownership, industry, finance, culture, or religion. The sober advocates of this view acknowledge public liberties and the rights of the opposition, but though the nonqualified classes may be permitted to express their grievances or their objections, they may not question the privilege of the qualified classes to have the final say. The conservatives no longer have strong objections to universal suffrage, but they interpret it to be more or less like those "family" elections in which employees of a business concern are invited to name representatives to a joint committee on entertainment or sports, one that will meet under the wise shepherd's crook of the owner.

Obviously, all the premises that inspire fascism are latent in this view, but it would be neither fair nor logical to deduce from it that the "right" is essentially identical with fascism. For the best principles, if carried too far, may lead to the worst consequences, and a political doctrine is defined as much by the limitations it observes as by the axioms it postulates. It is thus fair to grant recognition to the right in the family of civilized ideologies and to consider its point of view seriously. This is all the more im-

portant since we must recognize in the objections of the right a disturbing force, one that must be of especial concern to democrats, who are committed to a policy of consulting the people. To the totalitarians, who only feign consulting the people and whose strength lies in their ability to harmonize their tune to all common weaknesses, the faults of the people are welcome, for it is on these faults that totalitarians build their power.

Unfortunately, it is only too true that the people are ignorant, that they are easily deceived, that their votes are wrested from them by atrociously primitive devices—by hollow, booming phrases, by posters full of insults and nonsense, by endless repetitions, mirages, slanders, sophisms, slogans, and parades. With touching optimism, early democrats such as James Mill thought "that everything would be won if we taught the whole population to read."[1] They could not imagine that what the population would be given to read would not be the precepts of wisdom but the praise of folly. And in view of the atrocities committed in our day by totalitarians who have been put in power by the masses, many sincere democrats must wonder whether it was really judicious to give the masses the right to speak. Democrats thought that the people would use this right to establish justice, which had been withheld from them so long by the cruel egotism of their masters, and now they are using it to sanction slavery. Thus the arrival of the masses on the scene, hailed by progressives as the promise of social redemption, on the contrary looses on society most agonizing storms.

It only aggravates the sadness of these observations to see modern tyrannies being lauded by so many workers. When we behold the age-old victims of imposture crowning the most shameless impostors, and the multitudes we were counting upon to make life flower giving themselves

frantically to the artificers of death; when we see those who were unmuzzled yesterday applauding the censors of today, and the emancipated using their newly-won rights to forge new chains for themselves; when we see blood shed copiously under the indifferent, if not abetting, gaze of the very people who had always been bled—how can we avoid being overcome by tremendous disillusionment, feeling betrayed by the masses we worked so hard to awaken, and wanting to cry to them: Go back to the silence where you belong!

ARE THE ELITE MORE CAPABLE OF GOVERNING THAN THE PEOPLE?

Justified as this pessimism may seem, to abandon ourselves to it would mean yielding to the intoxication of extreme, hasty conclusions we criticize in totalitarians. In order to get a fairer measure of the sickness afflicting the popular judgment, we have only to look at that afflicting the judgment of the "elite." For in the long run, these "qualified" regimes, which are presumably superior to the blind reign of the crowd, have shown themselves little more capable of establishing reasonable government. Plato himself, who thought so little of the discernment of the people, proved to be very unwise in his choice of men. He dispatched to his great friend Dion, tyrant of Syracuse, his disciple Gallipus, who promptly assassinated Dion. Another of his pupils, Clearchus, whom Plato especially recommended to the citizens of Heraclea, usurped power in that city and established a shameless tyranny. Clearchus was assassinated by his colleague Chion, another philosopher dear to Plato. All the elites who have held power, whether it was the Attic philosophers, the Pharaohs of Egypt, the Chinese mandarins, the Roman patricians, the

feudal barons, the priestly castes, the monarchist princes, the urban plutocrats, or the bureaucrats of totalitarian parties—all, without exception, have been notorious for long series of crimes, conspiracies, betrayals, lies, and plunder.

In our day two qualified classes compete to monopolize power: the bourgeoisie and the Communist bureaucracy. Let us examine the abilities of each for the direction of public affairs.

Like the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie has financial security, culture, and experience in leadership. Its directive role in social life and its relatively small numbers allow it to watch over those of its members who form the government, so that these remain in touch with it and faithful to it. It is thus able to establish a stable administration. These, however, are the very conditions the proletariat fails to satisfy. If a man from the ranks of the proletariat comes to power, he at once rises above his group and eludes supervision; a workman who becomes a cabinet minister escapes from his class, whereas a bourgeois remains integrated with his.

Thus the bourgeoisie seems to meet the qualifications for a ruling class set up by the classic right. To the economic, cultural, and social factors in its favor we might even add one of a psychological nature: that the bourgeoisie are *a priori* apt to show themselves more tolerant than the masses, because they have opportunities to exercise authority other than political. The fundamental satisfactions of power are offered them in small quantities in their daily work; the proletariat, on the contrary, confined from time immemorial to a subordinate role, can enjoy authority only in manifestations of force, such as the brutal overthrow of the political order and the exercise of terrorism. In all truth, during tranquil periods the bour-

geoisie when in power prove to be a relatively liberal and clement ruling class. But what are those tranquil periods? Those in which its position is not threatened. But when its markets decrease, its margins of profit diminish, when popular demands become more insistent, then it immediately becomes brutal.

It is then that we see the fundamental vice of power restricted to a minority group, no matter how cultivated or capable: the minority will always use its power to defend its own privileges, above all else. All privileged classes that have enjoyed exclusive power without popular control have shown themselves egotistic, narrow-minded, and cruel as soon as their interests or their rule were jeopardized. We shall never remember enough the horrors of the ruthless accumulation of capital in the nineteenth century—children working fourteen hours a day in factories, miners buried alive, weavers mangled by their machines, colonial subjects paid off with a handful of rice or dates, the slave trade, commodities dumped into the sea to maintain prices, speculations on munitions, the disgraceful industrial suburbs. The popular protest against these abuses assumed the nature of a social war, which facilitated a degeneration into totalitarianism. The responsibility for this rests with the deaf, blind, and greedy bourgeois "elite," which—indifferent to the problems of those workers upon whom its success depended, shocked at the slightest sign of their emancipation—never yielded a penny that did not have to be torn from it like a piece of its flesh. How many misfortunes of our time are the harvest of that shortsighted egotism!

The "elite" that today aspire to take the place of the bourgeoisie show themselves no less egotistic, blind, and cruel, although they claim the right of succession, in the name of justice and reason. In our day they are not manu-

facturers and greedy financiers, but militant and conscious intellectuals, familiar with the historical process, skilled in dialectic philosophy, for whom the social sciences no longer hold any secrets; some of them are even eminent scholars committed to rational behavior, and all claim that an unselfish fervor brought them into the struggle for the rescue of the oppressed. This means that they represent the elite of the elite on the plane of the mind as well as of the heart. They show acute clear-sightedness respecting lies circulated by the competing elite of industry and finance, and prove to be redoubtable anti-deluders. But when it becomes a question of lies circulated by their own camp, they show an obtuse bad faith and become just as redoubtable stultifiers. They get involved in the grossest contradictions, are guilty of the most elementary faults of logic, take mere slogans for facts, and forced confessions for proofs. They become as credulous as children, as stubborn as illiterates, as insensitive as monsters. Their assertions take a place of honor in the age-old collection of inane political views of the "great," from which we shall present a few pearls.

Plato, whose wretched performance in the selection of men we saw, here indicates the fate he had in store for us in his ideal state: "Medical art," he wrote, "must not have for its aim the prolongation of life, but solely the interest of the state. . . . The doctor has no right to look after a patient who will not afterward be able to assume his ordinary duties, for such a man is useless to the state." [2] This is the monstrous conclusion one of the most brilliant intellects of all time drew, on the practical plane, from the theories he professed on the philosophical plane. In line with this aberration, the experienced ideologists of Bolshevism deduce from the ideal of a classless society that a worker has no right to his bread card if he is absent for a

day, without cause, from the work the state has entrusted to him. Saint Augustine maintained that Rome would not have been sacked by the Goths if it had banned its poets and dramatists, and Saint Louis Aragon declares that Europe would not be on its way to ruin if it had refused the motors and fertilizers of the Marshall Plan. As solutions to the delicate problems that have been awaiting solution by the elite for a century—the assimilation of mechanical processes, international peace, the flight from the land—Academician Maurras proposed the extermination of the Jews, and Academician Ehrenburg, the hanging of the Trotskyites. Despite his technical knowledge, a French manufacturer can attribute unemployment to the laziness of workers, and despite his dialectic training, a Soviet economist will declare that the famine in the Ukraine is caused by American spies.

Great political economists declared that industry would never recover from the abolition of child labor and that agriculture would go to ruin if farm women wore silk stockings. Today we hear the most brilliant Marxists state that a peasant who owns two cows is a class enemy, and that trains are derailed in Siberia because the Minister of Transportation in Moscow tampers with the switches at night.

Whole libraries could be filled with the tall tales and outrageous lies with which the distinguished dialecticians of all ages have bedecked their follies. In systems based on minority rule, such as aristocracy, oligarchy, plutocracy, theocracy, bureaucracy, it seems that the culture of the rulers has served only to enable them better to corrupt their judgments, and in turn better to camouflage their interests. But even the worst nonsense with which the bourgeoisie stuff our heads—the joy and gaiety of war, the sordid materialism of the poor—are but timid stammerings

compared with what prominent Communists hand out and swallow today. On their lips, egalitarianism becomes a defect of capitalist economy; the death camps of Siberia, idyllic "re-education" centers; twelve-year-old children, sufficiently adult to be punished by the death penalty; premeditated aggression, a peaceful defense taken by surprise; all the Bolshevik leaders except the chief, traitors in the pay of foreign powers.

We have seen poets—third-degree elite, if that is possible —who would vie with one another in the scrupulous choice of an adjective but who swallowed their pride and dedicated doggerel to the glory of the M.V.D.; we have seen surrealist painters, supposedly emancipated from academic rules, go into ecstacies over the most uninspired portraits of the mustachioed policeman whom the Marxists made a dictator. But never before in the history of the stupidity of the "elite" have they continued to burn incense before the altars of their government when that very government was preparing to cut off their heads. The instinct for self-preservation is generally considered one of the first manifestations of human and animal intelligence. Well, the communist intelligentsia has lost even this spark, adding a new and sinister touch to the picture of those follies that may derange the best-equipped minds, in this sea of passions that is politics. Marx would never have imagined that the spiritual attachment of his materialist disciples to the instruments and symbols of their power could become stronger than the attachment that every creature of average intelligence feels for his own life.

The traditional blindness regarding their domination, which in the past led the elite to be merely stupid, becomes today an hypnosis inciting them to destroy themselves. In order to gain a better perspective, it is advisable for those who criticize democracy on the basis of the inability

of the people to govern themselves, to stop and consider this inability of the communist elite to preserve themselves.

POWER CAPTIVATES MORE THAN THE MIND ENLIGHTENS

Thus, the communist intelligentsia, although it demands power on the basis of cultural qualifications, has nonetheless followed the long tradition of stupefying leaders. It has even heightened it with unprecedented excesses against reason and humanity. This removes any and all foundation from pretension for keeping government in the hands of educated minorities. It becomes obvious that while there is danger in handing over the control of the state to the ignorant masses, there is just as much danger in abandoning the reins to the elite; power captivates more than the mind enlightens. Hence, as soon as one class can make the state its game preserve—and this is what the system of restricted "democracy" permits it to do—it uses its culture to defend its own position and not to lessen the difficulties of other classes. It is no longer guided by rational conclusions that it could draw from its own knowledge, but by the counsel of its interests, passions, and prejudices.

In the light of this explanation, there is thus no longer any reason to be surprised that the elite can prove themselves incoherent and barbarous in politics at the same time as they are logical and humane in their professional disciplines. It is because, in the long run, a sonnet (even though bold enough to use a run-on line), a woman with four mouths, or an infinitesimal calculation[3] do not excite men's passions as much as honors, power, and money do. That is why the elite can remain superior and farseeing in academic discussion and yet be petty and blind as soon

as debate threatens to pierce the heavy armor that protects their present or future privileges. Thus those who attack universal suffrage because the masses are incapable of sound judgment on public affairs miss the point of their problem. Each class, cultured or not, defends its own interests—the nobles their fiefs, the capitalists their capital, the intellectuals their ideology (which doesn't mind being seasoned with fiefs and capital, too)—and therefore it is impossible to entrust power to a so-called enlightened minority. It is not the individual ancestry or allegiance that renders a minority unfit to exercise an exclusive power, but the fact that it is a minority, and by that very fact attached to its privileges, as a baby to its mother's breast.

The bourgeoisie, identified with its money, uses power to keep its money. The intellectuals, who are identified with a credo, use power to safeguard their credo. In either case, whether the question is one of financial or dogmatic eminence, political supremacy serves the interests of those who hold it. In passing from the material sphere to the spiritual sphere, the magic spread by power loses none of its potency. On the contrary, a dogma is more tyrannical than a bank account. It is a passionate force, one that demands bloodier sacrifices than the golden calf, at times even the sacrifice of its priests. And if the Communist clique, in order to play a ruling role, are willing to impose such an implacable rule upon themselves, we can well imagine that they will not hesitate to inflict suffering upon ordinary people.

The inescapable conclusion seems to be that while it is true that a specific degree of knowledge is a *necessary* qualification for ruling, it is not the *sole* qualification; and while we cannot count on the people to govern, because of their ignorance, neither can we count on the educated, because of their egotism. Must we then despair?

We should have to despair if the defects we have pointed out were irremediable; but in truth they are not, especially those pertaining to ignorance. For it is easier to correct ignorance, which undermines the people's ability to exercise power, than egotism, which corrupts the exercise of power by the privileged. This is all the more true because in order to give the people this education (the lack of which allegedly disturbs the right) and also to neutralize the egotism of the elite (whose excesses leave the right so unconcerned), it is again the methods of democracy, and not the system of qualifications, that prove to be the most effective.

TEACHING THE PEOPLE TO READ IS NOT ENOUGH

When the ideologist of the right criticizes democracy for subordinating the lofty spheres of government to the ignorant crowd, he does not tell everything. His criticism would be more acceptable if he added: But I ask nothing better than to enlighten these crowds as much and as rapidly as possible. Now, this is what he omits saying, because he does not want it and because his class interests make it impossible for him to want it. If he advises leaving the rigging to the sailors and the helm to the officers, it is with the air of an observer who is unconcerned with the business at hand and is leaving it to Plato and to common sense. But, as a matter of fact, he *is* concerned with the business, for he is one of the officers and intends to remain one; he does not want to have to compete for his commission tomorrow with a hundred aspirants who have come up from the ranks. To the extent that the nautical art becomes complicated, he is even willing that sailors learn enough to be able to handle the new instruments, even that the best of them carry their algebra far enough to become quarter-

masters, but not to the point where they can come and say to him: "Get out of there so I can take your place." In other words, under the stimulus of technical demands, a class of leaders may agree to give the people some education, but within strictly professional limits—that is, an education embracing the minimum of knowledge, of critical spirit, and of humanism.

The complete thesis of the right is thus as follows. The expressed part: The people cannot govern because they have no education. The unexpressed part: They must not acquire too much education.

Let us observe, in passing, that this jealous retention of cultural privilege is not only against the interests of the people, but is even dangerous for culture, for it can lead only to a gigantic bureaucracy at best, and to an obtuse tyranny at worst. Culture can without danger be restricted to a minority so long as the majority accepts a caste system. But more and more urgent questions continually arise; how can the minority answer them unless it escapes from clubs, from libraries, from salons; unless it vibrates to all hopes, to all distress, to all endeavors; unless it listens and gives advice to the very persons who are conceiving and stammering out most of its themes? If there had never been workers and peasants or ex-workers and ex-peasants capable of stating in general terms the pangs of their condition, the needs of their bodies, the revolts of their minds, culture would never have extended its research to such essential problems as the reconciliation of the rights of man with the burden of the worker, of intellectual independence with social servitude, of freedom with organization.

The question is not one of creating a Utopia, with farmers guiding the plow with one hand and holding their Aristotle in the other. We do not claim that one must

know Aristotle to have an opinion on public affairs. If that were necessary, the elite itself would be far from the mark, for its knowledge is never more than one degree ahead of that of the people, and its knowledge continues to remain paltry by comparison with the sum of all that should be known or used in governing wisely.

Here we come to a question lacking in the criticism from the right and yet essential for our discussion: Exactly what sort of education should the people be given in order to exert genuine control over public affairs? They should certainly know more than they know now, but above all, they should know more fundamental things. They should learn to distinguish the sound of truth from that of lies, to detect the popular demagogue from the honest reformer, to grasp the frontiers between reality and Utopia, to estimate the hierarchy of dangers, to be open to the objections and aspirations of others, to understand that the shortest path between desires and their realization is tolerance and not dictatorship. At the mere mention of such a program we realize that the education of the elite has not progressed much further than that of the masses.

Certainly present-day education falls far short of this ideal of popular humanism, which aims at training people's minds rather than at filling them. Through inertia or design, the schools today continue to teach—by routine methods that lag behind modern pedagogical theory—reading, writing, arithmetic, and the rudiments of history and geography—that is, the elementary education James Mill so naïvely thought would be the salvation of society, but whose inadequacy we are now forced to recognize. Let us not forget that education serves to equip minds to control power rather than to exercise it—not to enable men to devise solutions but to choose among those that are offered to them. The *art of thinking* is the essential that everyone

should be taught; but not even the elite are taught it today.

This art is not yet included in the curriculum, not because of inertia or design but simply because it requires teachers of unusual training. It is extremely difficult to teach how to think well, to distinguish hypotheses from certainties and causes from effects, to stick to the subject, to discern what attribute may validly be assigned a certain subject, to understand that every law has only the finite field of validity imposed by necessary and fruitful approximations, to detect flaws in reasoning, vicious circles, abusive interpolations or extrapolations. It seems possible, nevertheless, at least to teach how to recognize the coarser threads of voluntary or involuntary sophism.

Contemporary examples of vicious thinking are unfortunately not lacking. At random one could select a speech by Hitler or Stalin for the elementary classes, some democratic debates for the intermediate classes, and the texts of Jean-Paul Sartre for the upper classes, and one would have a sample of all possible vices of reasoning. The people must be immunized against demagogy, Utopia, or casuistry by systematic exercises in tracking down error, misinterpretation, nonsense, double meaning, evasion, exaggeration, tricks, lies—exercises that must be carried on all one's life outside school. This education would be just as salutary for the elite as for the people.

The objection may be raised that there is a good possibility that life will undo what school has accomplished, for the means of propaganda capable of confusing minds seem to grow faster than the means of education capable of enlightening them. This is what has been happening in many countries, thwarting the hopes socialism had for the growth in capability of the urban proletariat. It is largely because Marx saw the proletariat acquiring more knowledge than other numerically large classes that he assigned

it a guiding role and the historic mission of emancipating all humanity. What he did not foresee is that the same process that extended the experience of the proletariat might multiply even more rapidly the possible instruments of mental and physical encirclement capable of checking or diverting the proletariat's advance. The average worker of 1955, confronted by the problems of the day, might find himself, despite a broader education, less informed and less capable of initiative than the average worker of 1855 confronted by the problems of that time.

But if we look more closely we find that this recession has taken place only in countries subjected to strong totalitarian influence, fascist or communist. Nowhere else have refined means of persuasion been employed systematically to instill barbarous ideas into the minds of the people. Often, on the contrary, such means have been able to serve those educators, intellectuals, and fighters who are sincerely devoted to the advancement of the people. In England, for example, the level of social and cultural awareness of the workers is undeniably higher than it was a century ago. It therefore depends only upon the vigilance of men whether the technical advance in the means of suggestion over the means of reflection shall turn to the advantage, and not to the detriment, of popular culture.

This explains the error of the founders of democracy, who had based all their hopes on the education of the masses—so much so that for many the question was not so much the substitution of the reign of the people for the old forces of the sword, as the substitution of the reign of enlightenment for the old forces of superstition. This error, frequent with innovators who are carried away by the horizons they have discovered, was not an error of principle, but one of perspective. They saw this marvelous horizon as closer than it was, and the problem as simpler.

They thought that the marriage of the people with the good would occur as soon as they would have access to the alphabet, that this marriage would go hand in hand with the awakening of the people's minds, whereas in truth it cannot be effected without a constant struggle against the return of aggressive obscurantism. They were right in declaring that society would gain by teaching the people to read. Their only mistake was in believing that was all they needed to teach. The people must also be taught to think.

However, after the first stage was completed, but before the second was begun, there occurred a simple, familiar phenomenon that might have been foreseen—growing pains. It is characteristic of life that strength develops before wisdom and that youth rushes into action before understanding the problems. In the political sphere the people are still at an awkward age. They have received power before reason (as was the case with all other classes), and therefore they misuse it. What remains to be done is not to take away this power but to couple it with reason.

IF THE PEOPLE MUST KNOW TO GOVERN, THEY MUST GOVERN TO KNOW

"You have stated," an advocate of qualification might say to us, "that my colleagues criticize the people for lacking education and yet prevent them from acquiring it. But suppose they are not always as egotistical as you claim, that some sincerely feel a desire to raise the people to an intellectual level as close as possible to their own? Will this education not take a long time, and can it not be accomplished more effectively under the wise direction of those who already possess education than in the confusion of the market place and public folly?"

The first objection to this argument is that there is no

guaranty that our benevolent educators will ever give up their monopoly of political influence, which they retain "while waiting" for the masses to acquire more judgment. We have already had occasion to emphasize the naïveté of the argument frequently submitted in favor of communism, according to which the workers may be kept in absolute slavery for several generations in order to prepare them better for absolute emancipation later. This idea is absurd because it supposes that the leaders who have presided for decades over this enslavement will have the benevolence to give up their good jobs. The fact that the right proposes ideological subjugation instead of material slavery for the people does not make the principle any less fallacious. Even if there were leaders whose intentions, with respect to popular culture, were really pure and apostolic at the outset, the odds are that their successors, if not they themselves, would finally forget these goals if the practical life they organize "while waiting" whispers to them daily that it is so pleasant to remain at the top, with the masses below.

The second reason for rejecting a formula for government which would keep the masses from the management of affairs while awaiting their full education is that such a formula fails to recognize the nature of the instruction to be given. We have seen that an education most capable of enabling the people to control the government rests more upon discernment than upon erudition. Now, the ability to judge may be learned partly in schools, but its most important elements can be acquired only in practical life—in daily, direct contact with the problems that people are called upon to solve, and under the unexpected and shifting circumstances in which these problems occur. Everyone knows that to learn to swim, one must, after learning the rudiments of keeping afloat, get into the water.

Similarly, political education is gained primarily by engaging in politics. The surest way of learning to control power is actually to engage in manipulating it. This is another obvious point that the rightists curiously ignore. They insist that to exercise sovereignty one must have knowledge, but they do not add this other truth: that to acquire knowledge one must exercise sovereignty.

It is therefore clear that the best solution is still democracy, which teaches the people politics by calling upon them to practice it. In a sense, every effort of civilization, in its attempt to advance, is fraught with contradictions, since it tries to obtain a good government from a mediocre society and to expect slaves to do work that requires emancipated minds. Democracy may be considered the first step that will ultimately permit escape from the vicious circle of the people's ignorance perpetuated by their subordination. The operation of the multiple controls that balance and check the exercise of power, the rights conferred on the opposition, the electoral campaigns, offer the people constant incentives for reflection and innumerable opportunities for learning. Instead of exerting a repressing effect, as dictatorship does, democracy acts upon individuals with a relaxing effect, with expansion of their knowledge. Therefore, as soon as liberty is assured, criticism flourishes; and after criticism, reforms; and, thanks to them, a rise in the general cultural level. The ignorant masses, in demanding liberty and a share in the government, are reaching for the only means of learning. In fact, they have already learned a good deal, although democracy, properly speaking, has been in operation for only a few generations. An elite that is sometimes remarkable has come from their ranks and continues to distinguish itself, especially in those countries untouched by totalitarianism, both fascist and Communist, such as England, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries.

A general proof of the perspicacity democracy gives the masses, in spite of their ignorance, is that extreme abuses of power—terror, obscurantism, exploitation, serfdom—have never succeeded in being perpetrated systematically except by a dictatorship. To be sure, the people—like the elite—have sometimes voted freely for totalitarian parties, but this has always been before they have been able to evaluate the totalitarians' works. The people sometimes manifest a certain lack of foresight about future disastrous developments, but once these developments have occurred, they are not so blind as to endorse them. The dictator is so aware that in the long run the people will not renew his mandate that as soon as he is in power his first concern must be to take away their freedom of speech; he knows so well that they cannot be permanently deceived by lies and propaganda that he further gags them by terror. The Germans voted Nazi when they were able to vote freely, but when they had the Nazis they no longer had any possibility of voting freely. What would have been left of their first frenzy but for the Gestapo? And what would be left today of Communist authority in Russia but for repressive power?

Thus, while dictatorships can be installed by demagogy, they can be maintained only by the police. A force acting only on the mental and psychic planes cannot pervert the people *completely, all the time.* From this essential observation it may be deduced that nations, once they have enjoyed democracy, are already affected by no worse than a partial lack of culture. This partial lack is enough to allow totalitarians to multiply their harmful microbes, which is a danger, but it is not enough to infect people's minds irremediably, which is a life saver. Only when we can be shown a *barbarity without compulsion,* existing and prospering under its true guise with the permanent consent of the people, expressed in an atmosphere of complete free-

dom—only then will it have been demonstrated that the people are fundamentally incapable of participating in the conduct of public affairs. In this sense, the demonstration of incapability has thus far been furnished chiefly by certain elite, for some of these have lived and prospered contentedly in an atmosphere of barbarism. But the fact that barbarity cannot take root among the populace without uprooting liberty, nor be introduced without gagging the people, confirms the basic hypothesis of democracy: that justice and right *in the long run* concur with the freedom of the people.

Thus, popular education—reformed and modernized, prolonged and perfected by political discussions, guaranteed by freedom of thought, and based on the material well-being that alone can furnish culture its impulse and its security—will manage to surmount the redoubtable handicap of ignorance. It will justify the hope that power, subject to the control of the people as a whole, will be applied reasonably and humanely, since, as has been sadly demonstrated, power under any other rule always turns into oppression.

CHOSEN ELITE OR CONSECRATED ELITE?

We have seen that the ignorance of the masses is not the only barrier that hampers the establishment of an enlightened political power, and that the selfishness of the elite constitutes just as formidable a barrier. Indeed, this barrier is even stronger, for it is much easier to inculcate knowledge than detachment. Democracy, which is the only system that holds promise of getting past the first barrier, is also the only one that affords a hope of getting past the second.

The masses have needs but not education. The leaders

have education and, in addition, vested interests. Without education, the needs lead to slavish resignation; with vested interests, education turns into the passion of domination. The only way to keep society from being crushed between the two forces is to balance one against the other —to work out a system of reciprocal controls between rulers and ruled that obliges each group to act under the gaze of the other, in order to bring to it the complement of generosity or capability that it is lacking. This is what democracy achieves, or at least strives to achieve. The relationship of the governing class to the people then resembles that of technicians to a board of directors, except that directors represent private interests while the people embody the general interest. The ignorance of the board of directors in a highly specialized modern enterprise is generally as great as the people's ignorance of the problems of government. However, the board members are informed of the main outlines of the work by the department heads, who have to learn the art of popularizing their knowledge; the directors, with their supervisory skill, manage to impose their will upon those who know more than they do.

But, it will be said, it is this supervisory skill that the people lack. To make up for this, in a democracy political experts must submit reports to their constituents; other experts are thus enabled to point out the deficiencies that the people could not have detected by themselves, so that they are enlightened by these public debates. To a certain extent this machinery throws the control back into the hands of an elite, but it is a *functional* elite, no longer characterized *a priori* by the possession of wealth or adherence to an ideology, but *a posteriori* by the influence gained in the interplay of criticism and open debate. Such a governing class can never become an all-powerful, closed

body. Furthermore, political competition causes this class to break up into many elite groups associated with varied aspirations, operating simultaneously and limiting one another. From the interaction of these groups emanates a fringe of politicians—journalists, sociologists, economists, labor leaders, industrial leaders, writers, professors, technical experts—of varied backgrounds, education, and wealth. These, because they agree to free discussion of ideas and public control of actions, play an essential role in the progress of institutions, and they are, in the long run, the least unsatisfactory advisers since the beginning of organized society.

Democracy does not imply, as many people believe, an end to competency and to hierarchies. Our discussions have dealt primarily with the training necessary to control power and not on that much more specialized training required to exercise it. It was thus implied that there must be an elite in positions of authority. But in order to avoid the possible abuses of such an elite, if its position were too sovereign and crystallized, democracy provides that it will be chosen not according to its ancestry but according to its accomplishments; that it will rest in the last resort upon the consent of those it is to lead; that it will be periodically renewed and subdivided into different groups and competitors, taking their inspiration from all segments of the social body, so that the latter will remain free to replace a notable person by a capable one. Democracy therefore does not aspire to set up a regime without an elite, which would be demagogic, but to furnish a method for selecting an elite without establishing privileges.

This democratic elite does not form a distinct social class that can be put into a definite pigeonhole. If one asks the question: Who is the best fitted to govern?, we reply: Everybody. This reply must not be confused with the anarchist position, which, despite the attraction it may

exert upon some impenitent individualists, is not realistic for the simple reason that no society could survive two weeks without a government. Like the physicist who resigns himself to the constraints of gravity, we agree that the public welfare requires direction, but we think it absurd and harmful that a single class or a predestined party monopolize it. We even think that it is just this refusal to accept pre-established rulers that assures the best possible government.

Here is what lifts part of the veil of apparent good sense with which Plato clothed social inequality. His reasoning is at fault in this respect at least, that it accepts as settled one question of primary importance: by what process of elimination and by what right has a certain man, alone among a thousand, been able to acquire the competence and through it the luxurious cabin of the captain, while the others have remained sailors just good enough for the dirty work? On this point the philosophy of power-by-qualification agrees with totalitarian philosophy in postulating that there are pre-established hierarchies in human society. Such hierarchies can be stable only when their offices are transmitted independently of the personal values of those who are to occupy them, that is, by a blind mechanism, typified by heredity—the leader is dead, long live the leader. From this it follows that to accept a pre-established hierarchy is to prevent any innovation except through the use of dynamite. Democracy, unlike systems of qualifications, is adaptable without violent shocks to all forms that social life may assume. Its essential virtue is not perfection, which it does not possess any more than any other human work, but perfectibility. Its principal merit lies in this elasticity which permits it to clothe humanity, whose size and audacity are constantly growing, in a supple garment.

In truth, the idea of entrusting ourselves to a rigid social

hierarchy leads not merely to conservatism; carried to its logical consequences, it leads to incoherence. Any *a priori* principle of sovereignty that limits the right to rule over society to a predetermined individual is subject to an insoluble self-contradiction. Bertrand Russell gives a humorous illustration of this in the following parable: "Take next," he writes, "Nietzsche's cult of the hero, to whom the 'bungled and botched' are to be sacrificed. The admiring reader is, of course, convinced that he himself is a hero, whereas that rascal so-and-so, who has got ahead of him by unscrupulous intrigues, is one of the bungled and botched. It follows that Nietzsche's philosophy is excellent. But if so-and-so also reads it, and also admires it, how is it to be decided which is the hero? Obviously only by war. . . . Power philosophies, when account is taken of their social consequences, are self-refuting. The belief that I am God, if no one shares it, leads to my being shut up; if others share it, it leads to war in which I probably perish." [4]

Conversely, the principle of majority rule, with the basic addition that dissenters remain free to object and to try to win over the majority to their views, may be applied in all cases, whatever the economic system and the civil code, on as broad a scale as is desired, without destroying itself. It satisfies the condition of indefinite reproductibility that Kant postulates as the basis of all moral value. The superiority of democracy derives from the fact it conforms to this rule. The only lawful action, Kant tells us, is one whose principle may be invoked by all. "Act always according to a principle which you could wish were a universal law." Now, if I am an important person and I decree that only important persons shall share in the management of public affairs, I cannot at the same time want this decree to be universally applied. It is because the

"qualified" realize that their pretensions violate this fundamental rule of justice that they are always reduced to declaring that in reality they demand a monopoly of power, not by virtue of qualification but by reason of exceptional abilities. "Abilities admitted by whom?" they will be asked, and, cornered, they will declare: "By everyone," for if they said, "By ourselves," they would be brought back to their untenable starting point. But capability admitted by all is the very formula of democracy. Thus democracy is not merely the only regime that, on the political plane, satisfies the three essential conditions of being tolerable, open, and perfectible; it is also the only one that is coherent on the logical and moral planes.

To end our exploration where we began it, let us return to Plato's argument, which strikingly illustrates the ideology of closed, static systems, and let us point out that a second vice makes it completely fallacious: the implicit postulate that society has not only pre-established hierarchies but also pre-established aims. In fact, Plato's reasoning supposes that society, like a crew of galley slaves, is merely a mass of arms that toil to bring a ship expeditiously to a port named by the owner—that is, with a view to objectives independent of the possessors of the arms. But the men who form a society are not galley slaves. On the social ship they are both sailors and passengers. As sailors, they must row according to the captain's directions, but as passengers, it is up to them to decide where they wish to go and to assure themselves that the captain will not take advantage of his authority to make their life on board a hell. In short, it is their right to control their leader. No totalitarian will ever understand that the people are both the sailors responsible for keeping the ship afloat and the passengers for whose pleasure the ship is sailing.

9

Causes of the modern outbreak of totalitarianism

This book is descriptive and not historical. I have tried to analyze totalitarianism as it is manifested today and to examine its conflict with democracy. But thus far I have not tried to explain why it has appeared, or rather reappeared, in our time. When I examined its roots, I tried, to be sure, to go back to its sources, but only to those that lie in the psychology or the ideology of men, and not to those that derive from history.

Unfortunately, the field of historical explanation is even more slippery than that of ideological exegesis; thus the reader will excuse me if, venturing into it nevertheless, I take the following precautions: first, of offering my explanations as hypotheses; next, of not tracing them to a single cause but of presenting several; finally, of stopping with those that are immediately relevant to the phenomenon I am examining, without trying to discover, in turn, the causes of these causes. What I propose to do here is, in short, to review some of the factors that in the twentieth century have encouraged the revival of totalitarian forms of thought and organization that the preceding century had believed to be dead.

DOES MODERN TECHNOLOGY ENCOURAGE TOTALITARIANISM?

It frequently has been said that modern technology threatens the development of the individual and of liberties because it tends to depersonalize labor and to stereotype the setting of everyday life; furthermore, it is beyond the comprehension of the masses, and hence out of their control; and, finally, it demands an army of disciplined bureaucrats, who depend upon one leader. How much truth is there in these views?

So far as standardization of living is concerned, most articles, it is true, are mass-produced, but there is a much greater variety than when everything was made by hand. We need only glance at modern luxury or quality industries to note the lavish abundance of inventions and original creations that attest to the taste of the public and the imagination of inventors. Even in low-income homes we would find much less uniformity than there was a hundred years ago.

As for individualism, I do not think it was encouraged to any greater degree by the twelve- or fourteen-hour day of the artisan than by the eight-hour day of the worker on the assembly line. Besides, exactly what percentage of the proletariat works on the assembly line today? These deafening, obsessive, imperious lines are steadily being replaced by machines, to the point where the proportion of skilled to unskilled labor is growing steadily. Now, the skilled laborer in a modern shop has just as much opportunity to reflect on the problems of his work and thus to exercise his human faculties as the industrial artisan of long ago. Furthermore, in our day the hive of activity shuts down early, and during his leisure hours the worker finds around him, in newspapers, magazines, the movies, radio, TV, in-

centives to thought which, though they may lack refinement, are more stimulating for the mind than the visits to the tavern that were his only recourse a hundred years ago. We need not mention the opportunities for breathing clean air and relaxing in the country, made possible by vacations with pay, the five-day week, railroads, motorcycles, and automobiles.

A second argument has been emphasized by James Burnham.[1] In his view, the revival of totalitarianism is due in large measure to the abstract and impenetrable nature of modern economic life, which has reduced all citizens to the role of bees restricted to carrying out a tiny part of the program and incapable of seeing it as a whole. The master plan is in the hands of the engineers, managers, organizers, and other "technocrats" who alone have access to the more and more mysterious inner workings of the modern economic monster and who, by virtue of this fact, inevitably become the new masters of society.

By "technocrats" Burnham means the sole organizers of industrial, commercial, and financial technology. If we accept the word in this limited sense, it seems to me that his thesis, however brilliant and provocative, is weakened by two objections.

First, even granted that the influence of the organizers of the economy tends to become paramount, it does not follow that it will inevitably develop toward totalitarianism. The management of modern business demands infinitely more consultation, discussion, criticism, and conference than the despotic or paternalistic—but still discretionary—direction of factories and workshops of the past. This necessity to bring together different points of view can only encourage—and not prevent, as Burnham thinks—democratic habits among the technocrats. Modern technocracy substitutes the common, reasoned experience of all man-

agers for the arbitrary intuition of one all-powerful employer. It is enough to view industry from the inside to observe that the more modern it becomes, the fewer the orders and the more frequent the advice.

The second objection to Burnham's thesis is that neither the admittedly growing capability of the technocrats nor their influence suffices to raise them to the rank of a new ruling class. Instead, this status is achieved by a more active and more eager class, and one prepared much more adequately for sovereignty, thanks to having direct experience with handling men: the class of modern professional politicians. This development conforms, moreover, to the laws and consequences of specialization. Politics, like other disciplines, requires a more and more detailed knowledge and a longer and longer apprenticeship; like other disciplines, it has today become so arduous and sophisticated that it can no longer be exercised except by specialists of long training. Thus economic technocrats cannot compete with their political colleagues.

It is only if politics is defined as a technique—and it is tending more and more to become one—that there is confirmation of Burnham's thesis, according to which modern society is about to fall irresistibly under the influence of the technocrats. Even then, these experts in public affairs are not *all* heeding the call to the totalitarian camp. One group, however, is especially susceptible: the vague class of self-made men, so characteristic of our age. This group includes ambitious men of all types lured by a political career: educated but impecunious, cultured but not experienced in important roles, energetic, trained for command but lacking troops, sons of nobodies but trying to become masters of everyone. Many of these men have joined the staffs of the fascist and Communist parties. And if certain of their more modest technological colleagues

aspire to increase their political influence, they must join either the cavalry of the ruling bourgeoisie already in the saddle or the noisy troop of crusading candidates whose foot is in the stirrup; in neither case can we see how they are the ones who bring the special leaven of totalitarianism to the group they join. Those economic technocrats in search of power who do not join the democratic bourgeoisie in order to attain it are, to be sure, received cordially by their peers, the technocrats of totalitarian politics, but on condition that they adopt *their* views and methods. The result may indeed be a partnership of those who can drive machines with those who can drive men. But the latter are in the key posts.

We thus arrive at a revised version of Burnham's thesis. Modern society is indeed exposed to the increasing influence of a technocracy with totalitarian tendencies, but it is above all a political technocracy, one whose "organizers" are managers of minds rather than of factories.

THE BUREAUCRATIC STATE IS THE FORERUNNER OF TOTALITARIANISM

If we no longer consider the direct relationship between the workers and the industrial system, but the effect of the whole system on the whole of society, it may be correct to say that modern technology stimulates totalitarianism. The extent of this technology, indeed—and this is another important fact Marx did not observe—is not on an individual but on a group scale; it does not bestow these impressive powers on separate individuals but on grouped individuals, and only to the extent that myriads of delicate gears, social as well as technical, succeed in meshing without grinding. I can fly to Tokyo in forty-eight hours, which is miraculous, but it is not a miracle that I control per-

sonally. For me to be able to enjoy it, generating stations, power lines, radio and weather stations, freight offices, records divisions, banks, insurance companies, airports, trains, hospitals, universities, observatories—all must function perfectly; innumerable technical services must lend their aid, and endless administrative, social, and political regulations must be observed minutely. The palatable fruits of science are not at the side of every road, within reach of every hand; the tree that bears them grows, so to speak, only behind office counters, fertilized by collective discipline. Thus, modern technology threatens individualism not because of the specialization and monotony of work imposed upon the individual but because of the rigidity and complexity of organization imposed upon society.

In this sense, it is not limited to increasing the dependence of the individual upon the group; it also multiplies the bonds among different groups. We get the impression that even the presence of plant lice in the south of France will shake the latest philosophical system presented to the Institute; that we can no longer have a strike in one factory without its becoming an affair of state; that a landlord can no longer sign a lease with a tenant without the whole social system being involved. Mannheim calls this phenomenon the increase in the "density of events." [2] A chemist might say that society is becoming concentrated, the interaction of its molecules becoming more numerous and more intense and restricting the zone of autonomy of each of them. Mannheim observes that the liberalism of fifty years ago flourished in a diluted society, characterized by what he calls "the independence of the spheres." There were numerous fields in which life went on according to its own norms, independent of politics, such as the economic, religious, cultural, scientific, and social fields. In

large measure, liberty corresponded to the system of freedoms each of these spheres enjoyed, which in turn split up into units that were themselves largely independent: in the economic sphere, for instance, there were commerce, industry, finance, agriculture; in the religious sphere, the different faiths; in the literary sphere, the various schools; in the social sphere, the behavior peculiar to cities, rural districts, the bourgeoisie, and the *avant-garde.*

When the concentration of society increases, the freedom of each sphere is narrowed. The free path of the individual between the multiplying and tangled organs of control is reduced; his life depends more and more on the proper functioning of these organs, and their crises cause him increasingly grave terror. Order and security thus assume for him greater importance than liberty.

At the same time, the growing complexity of public life makes him dizzy. He can no longer find his way in the whirlpool of problems; he feels that any attempt he might make to help solve them would be vain; he is infuriated by discussions that he cannot understand, and longs to put an end to them. He will thus be attracted to the most extreme political doctrines, those that claim to provide the most universal panaceas and that are, on this account, the most intolerant. And since the development of democracy has inaugurated this era of "politics," which establishes ideology as a basis for power, a basis as substantial as money or birth were formerly, there will be no lack of candidates for the leading roles among these political technocrats. It is a godsend for storekeepers of public opinion when their customers prefer shoddy opinions or exaggerated, glittering, oversimplified formulas, so that the most easily produced article turns out to be the one that yields the fattest profits. Have not most industrial magnates founded their fortunes on the mass distribution of

the cheapest type of goods? The political technocrats who want to forge ahead will therefore zealously cultivate this weakness of the public for extremism, will hasten the fermenting of the grapes of dogma as much as possible, and will thus, in their turn, become the chief propagators of the totalitarian virus.

Another result of the increased density of society is the enormous expansion of the state. That the state in turn encourages totalitarianism is all too evident and has been pointed out so often that we need not go into it here. The unprecedented power that the governmental machinery of encirclement, propaganda, and repression has over the bodies and minds of individuals offers an invitation to dictatorship that frequently proves irresistible. Let us merely observe that this hypertrophy of the state's instruments of control and repression has been produced by two forces that, although they have come from different points on the horizon and have been animated by opposing interests, have operated the same levers and have thus produced the same effects. One of these forces was exerted by progressives, who were aiming at a more complete protection of the worker and the poor against the arbitrary dictates of the capitalist: hence the state becomes stronger than the employers, and by that very fact it is committed to giantism. The other force, still more redoubtable, evolved from nationalism and war. We have seen the close relationship between nationalistic, imperialistic, and totalitarian ideologies. Here we find it cemented by the prolific, voracious substance of the state. Nothing enhances the natural supremacy of a state so much as the activities required to promote and defend national grandeur. Setting up customs barriers, heightening economic and cultural autarchy, filling barracks, regimenting youth, piling up armaments, mobilizing citizens, working up patriotism—

these are choice tasks for every bureaucracy that has fallen heir to the government of a territory. For two centuries the expansion and toughening of the statist machine have gone hand in hand with the intensification of nationalism.

DO ROMANTICISM, MARXISM, AND THE DECLINE IN RELIGIOUS FAITH WORK AGAINST DEMOCRACY?

Nevertheless, one important objection can be raised. All the great countries of modern times have known nationalism, the inflation of the state, the increase in social complexity, the birth of an active class of opportunists seeking to gain power by manipulating public opinion. And yet totalitarianism has developed strongly only in a few of these countries (Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc.). In others, such as England, Switzerland, and the United States, democracy thus far has gone through these ordeals without the development of fascism or communism to any significant degree.

I believe that this striking difference in reaction to the same group of stimuli can be explained only by invoking ideological factors, which, I grant, themselves derive from prior circumstances of a more fundamental nature, which I shall not go into here.[3]

Three of these factors seem to me important: the decline in religious faith, the spread of romanticism, and the Marxist infleunce. Reading this list, one might think that it emanated from some provincial reactionary whose mental development had stopped with Joseph de Maistre. This would be a misconception, and I shall explain myself on this point, but only after examining the facts, for I do not want to make the error, all too common in our day, of thinking according to consequences and not according to facts.

The Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples for the most part have preserved their religious beliefs almost intact. On the Continent, on the other hand, the churches have lost a great part of the influence they once exerted over men's consciences. Half the public—the very half that enjoyed the greatest intellectual standing—has become frankly hostile to them, and many of the remaining half follow the ceremonies of the Church only out of habit. They scarcely believe in God. But for all that, they have not stopped wanting to believe in Him, and it is this hiatus that totalitarianism tends to fill. The formal apparatus of Christian dogma has been dissipated by the powerful blows of *avant-garde* criticism and by frequent instances of priests' condoning the injustices of the established order. But mystic urges continue to throb in people's hearts. One particular faith has been shaken, but not the need for faith—the need to surrender oneself to a higher force, to adore the ineffable, to feel oneself under the aegis of a transcendent rule. No longer able to satisfy this need by a heavenly cult, humanity turns to earthly cults. It seeks to fill the place now void of divine substance with a social substance, but without losing the savor of consecration. Totalitarianism replies to this aspiration by substituting for the church, a party; for dogma, a doctrine; for rites, parades; for the catechism, statutes; for saints, illustrious leaders; for demons, opponents; for the invisible God, a living god but one equally master of destinies and dispenser of grace and damnation. Totalitarianism, with its political idols, has come to assuage the anguish of alienation caused by the loss of metaphysical idols.

The social order is not the only clay from which history has fashioned substitutes for cast-off divinity. Romanticism, at least in its original form, has contributed greatly to the success of substitute secular religions. It may seem

surprising that a purely literary movement should be considered here, but if we look closely we shall see that it has overflowed the domain of the Muses and has shaped values, states of mind, and even the ideology of whole peoples. More precisely, it underwent this extraordinary expansion in countries that proved later to be easy preys to totalitarian intrigues, and it remained within bounds in those countries, such as England, that resisted such intrigues. France, Germany, Italy, and Russia may be said to be living in the romantic period to the extent that the people as well as the privileged classes respond only to romantic types of behavior: spontaneous urges as against reasoned actions, the past as against the present, intuition as against experience, the excited, the unforeseen, and the arbitrary as against the calm, the known, and the reasonable—the extreme, in short, as against the moderate. It may be said that the romantic is a man weary of civilization; so is the totalitarian.

In taking for its target the "mediocre" bourgeois, romanticism has rehabilitated the courageous, flamboyant noble—whose spirit derives from power concentrated in an individual—and the rebellious outlaw—like Hernani, generous at first, but whom people later praised for his feats of arms, losing sight of his motivations. Nietzsche's superman is a good representative of the synthesis of these two types.

Romanticism has done the totalitarians an even greater favor. Prior to the advent of this movement, the subversive spirit was tied to rationalism: it advocated justice based on reason, and in essence attacked privilege based on superstition. Romanticism succeeded in breaking up this alliance. It preserved, even increased, the prestige of nonconformity, but created, as a complement, a prestige of the irrational. This new mixture encouraged the coupling, so

characteristic of modern totalitarianism, of revolutionary form and reactionary spirit, of reform and police, of emancipation and the knout. This is the most harmful contribution of romanticism in the political field—to have given cruelty a Messianic luster. Under its influence developed that literature of Satanism and slavery that tends to present the savagery of intolerance as more interesting than the sweetness of liberty, a literature whose typical hero is Torquemada (presented by Victor Hugo, alas), the inspired torturer who burned bodies in order to save souls. What a fine text, in Alexandrine verse, for Hitler and Stalin!

There remains Marxism. Why did it develop primarily on the European continent, without ever getting a foothold in England or in the Scandinavian countries? This is perhaps due to the important fact that the ruling classes of those countries have had the knowledge and ability—thanks to a stronger economic foundation—to meet popular demands with a broad viewpoint. In other countries the bourgeoisie proved to be both greedy and blindly insensitive to its own interests, yielding only by bits, and perpetually on the verge of civil war. Whatever the case may be, whether Marxism was impelled by the demon of the bourgeoisie or by a demon of its own, it has aimed pre-eminently at giving the aspirations of the workers a warlike tone and defending them by warlike methods. By virtue of this fact, it inevitably contributed to bring warlike values back into fashion—the values of totalitarianism.

We have no desire to go into a detailed analysis of Marxism here; from the viewpoint that concerns us, we have only to recall the salient points that are remembered by history and the public at large: that Marxism is tough socialism (destined thereby to become toughly antisocialistic), as contrasted with the soft socialism of the reformers.

As such, it fits in perfectly with the line of romanticism and with what we have called "substitute secular religions." Its mystical elements are notorious: first, the need to subject society to transcendent forces that dominate it—in this case, to that blind economic determinism whose fundamental role, despite its scientific pretensions, is to abase the pride of men who aspire to act according to their consciences. Next, the concept of the historic mission of the proletariat, in which is found, ever so slightly transposed, the Christian myth of "the last" that shall be "first" and of the redemption of all by those who have suffered the most. Finally, the fondness for absolute certainties, for prophecies and dogmas. The romantic elements in Marxism are apparent. The future emancipation of humanity by those members who are today the most oppressed is a theme romantic in its sentimental and paradoxical aspects, since it makes greatness emerge from what is presently humble.

Marxism has contributed to one theme a peculiar, extra-romantic touch, but one still more encouraging to totalitarianism: the theme of science, which romanticism approached in a liberal manner but which Marxism treats pretentiously. The Marxist derives a certain arrogance from the idea that he works not like a petty bourgeois, with moral illusions, but like a physicist, with laws of bronze revealed by the materialistic analysis of the "substructure." He feels a titillation of pride, accompanied by an itch of cruelty, when he assumes the cold and somewhat Mephistophelian appearance of the scholar "who recognizes only facts." He uses the authority of facts to support Machiavellianism and to add a supposedly scientific voice to the chorus of cynics who jeer at altruistic ideas. What he really does is to sanction the destruction of the hopes of the workers; it will no longer be to fill the pockets of the leaders that

the screw will be turned on the people, but because science wills it. Thus, by one of those ironical twists with which history is filled, the doctrine claiming to base the emancipation of man upon science now turns science against the humanitarian goals it had sought during the nineteenth century, and makes it the source for weapons with which to perpetuate oppression.

SOCIAL PHENOMENA ARE MANY-SIDED

With this justification of my affirmation that romanticism, Marxism, and the decline in religious faith have encouraged totalitarian tendencies, let us return to the shocking aspect it must assume.

In reality there is nothing shocking. To be convinced of this, it is enough to resist certain slogans that stuff our reasoning with fallacious deductions, as, for example, the one that urged us to believe that if a theorem is true, its converse is also true. Thus, from the fact that the decline in religion may have encouraged totalitarianism, under certain circumstances, it does not necessarily follow that the preservation of religion assures democracy. The best proof of this is that for centuries faith reigned undisputed in the hearts of men at the same time that autocrats were reigning undisputed over their bodies. If the dissolution of mystics of the heavenly type resulted in the recrudescence of new mystics of the earthly type, it was perhaps because this dissolution took place before the social order had had the time and the means to indoctrinate all minds with the vision of a world at once rational and satisfying. For the lack of religious faith to be compatible with democracy, a garden and not a jungle must be substituted for the lost paradise, and men must be taught to respect what is good for them and not what overawes them.

As for romanticism and Marxism, though they undeniably have facilitated the intoxication of minds by modern totalitarianism, that does not mean they have had only this unfortunate result. It cannot be denied that romanticism, in literature and the arts, has been a source of beauty that still offers us fresh and delightful draughts. Why could what is good in poetry not be harmful in politics? Perhaps wisdom would require each man to have two strings to his bow: one for reality when he wants to eat, and one for the miraculous when he wants to dream. And even if these two fields should overlap, it is not always disadvantageous. The emphasis that romanticism puts on the irrational may even bring certain salutary effects into the social field, for cold reason frequently serves to justify a certain form of conservatism, and the praiseworthy breaks with the established order have sometimes implied a certain fondness for the extraordinary and adventurous. The impulses that we have mentioned and that stimulate totalitarianism do not constitute an exhaustive list of romantic states of mind. They are supplemented by others that no democrat would disparage, as, for example, repugnance for everything that stifles human nature, rejection of the bonds in which society imprisons so many valid aspirations, a tendency to feel charity and love. That is why the author of *Torquemada,* in which the sinister sophism of the executioner-redeemer was put into flamboyant verse, could be the same poet who ended his life in deep communion with the oppressed and who wrote those magnificent *Châtiments* in which, for centuries, free men will find inspiration to strengthen their hatred of tyrants and their sense of human solidarity. Though there is a romanticism that intensifies the shrieks of violence, there is also another that accompanies the songs of liberty.

It is even possible to discover beneficial effects of Marx-

ism. It must not be forgotten that Marxism, before taking the form of Soviet totalitarianism (with an ease that disqualifies it forever) had added its voice to the great protest of the poor that marks our whole era, and had given it both vigor and argument and thus contributed to the success of basic reforms. Though it tolerated revolting atrocities, it was also able at times to serve as an antidote to an exaggerated emasculation of reform. Though it transmuted consciences into elemental, cruel, and even antiquated formulas, it sometimes awakened other consciences to the idea of social justice—those eager for economic explanations but not satisfied by the moral revolt alone.

All this shows that social phenomena are many-sided and, depending upon circumstances, can encourage or thwart various political developments. We have just observed this in three phenomena that are obviously among the most polymorphous, since they pertain to the ideological field. But the factors we have cited to explain the revival of totalitarianism may, under certain circumstances, be profitable to democracy: thus an increase in the "density of events" may encourage citizens to feel greater solidarity; modern technology may increase general prosperity and thereby cut the knot of prejudices; pressure of power-seekers may help to goad the Old Guard in office; state inflation may throw light on problems that are relevent to the whole of society but that have been veiled by the indolent liberalism of "independent spheres."

But though a given phenomenon may beget forces that have opposite effects, it is nonetheless true that in a given period of history one force is predominant and is exerted only in a single direction. We were thinking in these terms when we mentioned some causes of the revival of totalitarianism in our era.

Man's road is tortuous. Nothing man undertakes is wholly right or pure. No egotism is completely criminal, no devotion completely holy, no action follows a truly pure inspiration. A tyrant's punishment is not motivated solely by the love of liberty; a thousand other motives more or less suspect underlie the act of justice. If we teach the people to read, the most misleading works are at once printed for their use. If universal suffrage is attained, political mountebanks arise immediately. If we invent the radio, lies are promptly aired. It is impossible to rely upon a personal level of education or upon an experience that one believed was understood. No peril can be avoided without creating the possibility of new dangers; no folly can be corrected without inviting new aberrations; no plateau can be gained without discovering new chasms.

Nevertheless we must go upward, for the land below is too barren. Despite the unsuspected crevasses and ridges, we find ourselves, after all, higher up. Such is our lot. We live on inhospitable slopes where we must struggle incessantly to raise, here and there, the foodstuffs that will permit us to progress. And we do progress, but slowly. Naïve as we are, we must not think we shall arrive tomorrow at the Eldorado for which we set out yesterday. All living matter survives by chance. By nature, man's is no better suited to his own well-being than any other kind of matter. But it contains an element capable of reducing its suffering: the mind, if it remain vigilant. Let us therefore remain vigilant. Let us realize, once and for all, that the slow geological toil of human societies, like that of the earth, forms only impure ores. Let us patiently separate our metal from the lode.

10

Defense of progress

We have replied to the right, which cites the ignorance of the people as an argument against democracy, that education is being increasingly diffused. We have replied to the Marxists, who cite the deception implied in social inequality as an argument against democracy, that political justice is gradually being achieved. We have defended democracy by invoking the future as well as the present. Our present society is not yet ideal, but, unlike dictatorship, it has every chance to improve, for the foundation is sound. It is not perfect but perfectible, since it contains the machinery for self-correction. This means that its cause is good to the extent that it is in harmony with a general upward movement.

"Thus, to defend democracy," our opponents will retort in the skeptical tone of wise men who think themselves informed because they have given in to the claims of totalitarianism, "you are reduced to accepting that innocent faith in progress professed by the nineteenth century. But it was merely an illusion that modern sociology has exploded and that is entertained nowadays only by a handful of incorrigible, bearded sentimentalists. Come now, nothing important ever changes."

Now, I am actually living in the twentieth century, not the nineteenth; I have seen Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin; I have no beard, and yet I continue to believe in progress, that arduous smile of History. And an objective view of history discloses that when there is equal reason for hope and despair, hope prevails, despite appearances.

Many delight in ticking off the crimes reported in the morning paper to prove that our times are out of joint and that our generation has deteriorated. But they fail to observe that crime has always existed, whereas newspapers are a recent phenomenon. Who can prove that the great virtue attributed to the past does not draw its luster from the anonymity of time? To our unaided eye, the gushing water looks crystal clear. But here is an inventor of lenses who puts a drop of it under a microscope, another inventor who makes printing presses to publish what the lens grinder saw, and now everyone knows that the drop of water is swarming with microbes. The water did not deteriorate; our sight improved. Man is not worse; more publicity is given to his faults. The newspaper represents progress.

But it lies, the pessimist says; its lens distorts. Of course; and were the magician-scribes who instructed the people in the Golden Age models of scientific integrity? In those days they received a dole from one master alone. Today they have so many masters that we must resort to the comparative study of contradictory lies. The very diffusion of errors limits the depth of their influence. Yesterday's priests told the people that they had spoken to the god Apis; our ancestors believed them. Today's priests declare in print that they have conducted fair elections; we do not believe them. Even though we may be ill-informed on the facts that relate to our destiny, it is a sign

of progress that we try to determine what they are and to evaluate them critically.

The idea that our morals were nobler in the past springs from the timid or selfish illusion that the simple man is more moral than the complicated man, the natural state more honest than the social state, poverty more salutary than riches, humility more worthy than ambition, ignorance wiser than knowledge. But the truth is that the farther back we go toward distant ages, the more we see how labor toiled and suffered and how disdainfully the worker was scorned. If we compare present-day labor legislation with the code that, as recently as 1868, governed conflicts between workers and employers and stipulated that "the employer's unsupported statement be accepted"; if we think of the abolition of child labor, the prohibition of night work for women, the control of unhealthful and dangerous labor conditions, of old-age assistance, unemployment relief, hospitals, schools, maternity clinics, nurseries, social security, union rights, we must realize that to deny progress is absurd. It is only the totalitarian regimes that have reverted to the ancient system of slavery.

Man's increased mastery over nature is the first requisite for his generosity toward his fellows. The more human kilowatts a society expends to acquire a pound of bread, a yard of cotton goods, and a roof tile, the more immoral it is. A detailed examination of the actual life of the past discloses the inevitable roguery of needy humanity. Would they have erected so many gallows, wheels, stakes, pales, crosses if men were not more depraved than in our time?

The respect for human life, even though it is restricted to years of peace and to democracies, is an acquisition of modern times. Slaves are no longer thrown to the lions, virgins no longer stabbed at the foot of altars, infirm old men no longer exterminated. The infant Victor Hugo

would have been tossed over the walls of Sparta; the nineteenth century permitted him to live, and he wrote the story of Jean Valjean, sentenced to prison for having stolen a loaf of bread. The twentieth century thinks these stories melodramatic because it has instituted soup kitchens and because trial by judges has delivered it from trial by the nobles. The recent introduction of the concept of "extenuating circumstances" into most codes of justice is based upon the revolutionary idea that the fault may lie not so much in man as in his living conditions. The justice of the past, on the contrary, concentrated attention on the person of the prisoner and not on the causes of his guilt; by making the accused seem monstrous, it encouraged aggressive tendencies and could result only in vengeance. Democratic justice, to the extent that it questions the System, learns to punish less and cure more. And you say that nothing has changed in the history of man!

Those who lament the ugliness of our political life forget that sophisticated Romans called their famous Senate the cheaters' club. The difference is that in the good old days the common people knew nothing of their masters' doings, whereas in our day everyone knows and judges the slightest trend in political life. Today everyone becomes indignant when an opportunist makes fools of his constituents by buying influence, forgetting that long ago, ambitious men assassinated those who stood in their way. The history of princes is but one long chronicle of murders. It is a sign of progress that the thirst for power must now circumvent institutions rather than destroy adversaries. In imposing on leaders the requirement of obtaining the authentic or even falsified consent of the governed, humanity has taken a decisive step forward. It is unfortunate that public opinion is still so easily misled, but it is consoling that it must now be deceived rather than ignored.

But are not wars more destructive and cruel than before?

This remains to be seen. There have been battles fought solely with pikes, swords, and boiling oil, and yet ninety per cent of the fighters have been killed—a much greater proportion than in modern wars. Modern minds have been struck with terror, and not without reason, by the horror of Hiroshima, where more than a hundred thousand were killed by a single bomb. One forgets that immediately afterward, militarists—as hard on their people as were the Japanese war lords—were forced to sue for peace, and thus years of war and the loss of millions of human lives were avoided. But the Carthaginians were massacred to the last man, including babes in arms, after which the city was razed to below its foundations and the site plowed under to restore it to its primitive barrenness. The massacre of Oradour is justly cited as one of the most barbaric deeds of our day. Alas, history is replete with barbarous deeds. The massacre of Oradour was perpetrated on a small village, by a band of sadists whose supreme leader, Hitler, will forever remain stigmatized. But Alexander the Great, considered by antiquity the most glorious of rulers, exterminated, to the last person, men, women, children, and the aged of important and prosperous cities, which he obliterated completely from the face of the earth.

Furthermore, mechanical weapons, by doing away with direct contact between the arm that strikes and the blood that flows, take away from military murder not, to be sure, the irreducible atrocity that it presents for the victim, but a little of the sadism that it inspires in the killer; therefore it becomes less difficult to limit aggressiveness to the period and to the fields of war. The mercenaries of olden times fought to kill, violate, and pillage. Today we are obliged to tell the soldiers, even those of the most cruel dictator-

ships, that they are fighting for the Nation, a System, a Party—in short, for an ideal. This, too, is progress.

The disappointed also challenge science. Each day they discover that physics and chemistry do not bring happiness. They nobly apostrophize the atom, and, with a great show of lofty humanism, revoke the favorable verdict which, in their initial innocent enthusiasm, they had thoughtlessly accorded to technical discoveries. The discussions in this book show that the only way to build a society favorable to man is to approach the great unknowns of economy and politics in the same spirit and with the same methods of research that have brought about the elucidation of some of the phenomena of nature. The last object of our superstitions is our soul. When we begin to examine it with the eyes of science, the dormant fascist in each of us will be nearly ready to expire, for we will have undertaken to fill up the greatest of those yawning chasms in the landscape of our knowledge: the one we ourselves create.

It is not true that the balance sheet of science is negative. On the debit side there are, to be sure, factory smokestacks and armaments—although it must be said openly, for it is a fact, that because of the atrocious atomic bomb, civilization in Western Europe has been preserved. The techniques of mass communications cannot be listed on the debit side alone, since they have served for spreading splendid works and ideas as well as for degrading propaganda. It is not the rotary presses that print the pamphlets, nor the airplanes that scatter them over the cities, nor the air-waves that carry messages to our homes that lie; it is the men who write the pamphlets. Let them write the truth—and presses, planes, and air-waves will become the most useful auxiliaries of culture.

And on the credit side, what a prodigious harvest! How fortifying for the disinherited of the earth, how tonic for

the explorers, how exciting for the curious! How many troubles relieved, how many servitudes reduced, how much our horizons have been broadened! And even those who dislike certain vulgar forms of modern comforts will have to abandon their reservations before the achievement that crowns all the others: the protection and prolongation of human life. This life, to which we attach supreme importance, in the last half century has been prolonged from an average of forty-five years to sixty-five. This is a greater increase than occurred during the 2,400 years that separate us from Hippocrates. Before this advance alone, the blasé expressions, especially if they are assumed in the name of humanism—and beyond the age of fifty—seem in somewhat bad taste.

And how do you regard the dictators who are still in control today?

In speaking of them as monsters, you show your superiority to your ancestors, who submitted to them as to gods. Dictators are becoming scarce (take a look at your history book around the years 1000 B.C. or 1600 A.D.) They have bad consciences. Progress has made these glorious oligarchs, who once disposed of whole peoples in broad daylight and by divine right, into tramps who must take their political programs from the garbage cans into which we have thrown the offal of oppression; into megalomaniacs, obliged to stir up petty scandals while awaiting a moment of confusion when we let go the reins. For they no longer reign over the ignorance of liberty but only over its crises.

Far from openly rejecting democratic principles, the totalitarian leaders, though they actually exercise a more arbitrary power than the absolute monarchs of the past, no longer dare say with the tranquillity of a Louis XIV: "I am the State." On the contrary, they strive to show that it is they and not the democrats who most faithfully grant the deepest desires of the nation. Gnawed by the desire to

seem to rule legitimately, they stage grotesque plebiscites and try by pitiful tricks to make them seem democratic. The candidates have no rivals, the ballots offer no alternatives, but the people are invited to make their choice. Terror freezes the mind, the voters are reduced to the state of automatons, but these automatons are moved into voting booths. And as if this were not enough, the police spirit away the ballot boxes and tamper with them. Whereupon they finally produce the pre-established 99 percent vote, and the dictator, throwing out his chest, cries: "See, they have voted yes." No matter if the "they" are no longer conscious creatures but sleepwalkers, if the "yeses" have no more meaning or value than "noes," if what they say is only the phonographic reproduction of the slogans that have deafened them. The fiction is preserved: the government has been invested with the confidence of the governed.

A cheering spectacle, these democratic poses of Caesars trapped into making political counterfeits, these scepters brandished with one hand while the other begs and steals votes, these infallibles devoured by the necessity of justifying themselves to the little man. As soon as they require some prestige, they must beg it from the great idea they pretended to scorn: that the government is legitimate only with the consent of the governed. As the sun dominates the clouds, liberty dominates the tyrants.

How uncertain these brassy regimes must feel, to force themselves to these costly semblances, which no longer deceive anyone. Even when certain totalitarian ideologists, weary of panting after models they hate, indulge in a little cynical literature to praise the models they venerate, how far they stop short of the depths of their thought! Thus we have heard them, with the apparent courage of their convictions, present an apology for war, which selects the strong and exalts virtues; but they have never been

heard to subscribe to the consequences of their philosophy and say, for example: "You may criticize Hitler all you like, but it was thangs to him that we had the war." Thus, even in their ostentatious exaggerations, these totalitarians, whom pessimists assume too complacently to be victors, are afraid to reveal their true colors and must show themselves piteously disguised in the cast-off clothing of democracy.

The democracies feel no need to stage similar shows. They do not consider their methods shameful and that only the canons of dictatorship are laudable, so they do not have to practice liberty in secret but display tyranny in public for the sake of their reputations. The fact that no democracy has ever thought of putting on the guise of dictatorship, whereas all dictatorships strive to adorn themselves with the charms of democracy, should demonstrate the value that the two regimes, in their own consciences, recognize in each other. The comparison between them could, in a sense, be clarified with this question alone: *Which imitates the other?*

We cannot emphasize strongly enough this secret inferiority that obliges despots to appeal to the very values they despise. In this tribute paid to democratic virtue by totalitarian vice lies an historical progress that we cannot emphasize too strongly: the democratic ideal has won—if not in actions, at least in consciences; even in bad consciences. What a pity that the democrats do not draw more assurance and pride from this fundamental fact, and that they continue to accord the role of accuser to totalitarians of all types! The dictator still swaggers about, but as between him and ourselves, he is the more worried: in the shadow of the arches erected for his own triumph, under the waves of the crowds bowing before his image, at the bottom of the obedient ballot boxes, the eye of democracy rests upon Cain.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

1. Dublin, Lotka, and Spiegelman, *Length of Life, A Study of the Life Table.* Rev. ed. New York, Ronald Press, 1949. Human life expectancy was twenty years in Greece in the Bronze Age, thirty-three in the Middle Ages, forty-one in 1850, fifty in 1900, and sixty-seven in 1946. The last figures apply to the Anglo-Saxon world.

2. Prokopovitch (*Bulletin économique,* No. 139; pp. 1-6. Prague, 1938); Yourievsky (*Annales russes;* Paris, 1938); Bettelheim (*La planification soviétique,* thesis, pp. 318-320. Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1939); Baloueff (*Le mystère de la population soviétique,* in *La vie économique et sociale,* May 15, 1938); Salomon Schwartz (*Le courrier socialiste;* Paris, the beginning of 1939).

3. *Papers Concerning the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany, 1938–1939 (Command Paper 6120),* in *Accounts and Papers, 1938–1939,* Vol. XII, p. 14. British Government, London, 1939.

4. *Die Nationalsozialistische Partei Korrespondenz,* 1931; and *Berliner Tageblatt,* January 16, 1927.

5. Sparta was governed by thirty elders and two kings chosen from among men over sixty years old.

6. *Kirche, Kinder, Küche* (church, children, cooking).

7. *Izvestia,* July 4, 1935; *Pravda,* May 28, 1936.

8. *Pod Zamenen Marksisma,* November, 1936.

9. *Pravda,* May 6, 1950.

10. *La vie économique,* November 28, 1936.

11. *Nepszava* (Organ of the Hungarian Communist Party), March 7, 1951.

12. Statement by Kirov in *Pravda,* February 2, 1934.

13. A. Barmine, *Vingt ans au service de l'U.R.S.S.,* p. 363. Paris, Albin Michel, 1935. Barmine, a former chargé d'affaires at Athens, was a member of the Communist party for nineteen years.

14. J. Margoline, *La condition inhumaine,* p. 50. Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1949.

15. *Magyar Nemzet,* November 20, 1950.

16. *Preuves,* April, 1951.

17. *Uchichelskaia Gazeta,* August 7, 1943. See also *Izvestia,* September 4, 1935, and the *Bulletin of the Commissariat for Public Instruction,* April 10, 1935.

18. Extract from a Soviet pamphlet, *The Two Cultures,* by I. V. Kemenov, a high Soviet official who in 1947 was president of the V.O.K.S. (Society for Soviet Cultural Relations with Other Countries). His pamphlet has a semi-official status.

19. Several articles by Gerassinov in *Pravda,* July 3, 1947, and in *El Contemporanul,* Romanian newspaper, March 9, 1951.

20. *Soubotnik:* Voluntary, unpaid factory labor on Saturdays. *Voskresenje:* Public-service labor (road maintenance, building repair) performed without compensation on Sundays. "In the Savropol district alone, this labor repre-

sented a value of 500,000 rubles in recent months." (*Izvestia,* August 19, 1950.)

21. Reported by El Campesino, Jules Margoline, Kazimierz Zamorski, J. Dallin, Victor Serge, etc.

22. In 1944 a decree was issued forbidding marriages between Soviet citizens and foreigners. In 1947 another decree forbade them to *speak* to a foreigner.

23. Karl Marx in a speech at Amsterdam in 1872, quoted by Lucien Laurat, *Le manifeste communiste de 1848 et le monde d'aujourd'hui,* p. 49. Paris, Self, 1948.

24. When it is claimed that Lenin "gave" the land to the peasants, it is an abuse of terms, the peasants having begun to occupy it spontaneously, starting the summer of 1917. He merely confirmed an existing fact.

25. Term used by *Izvestia,* March 28 and May 16, 1937, and by *Pravda,* May 29, 1935.

26. Victor Serge, *Memoires d'un revolutionnaire,* p. 143. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1951.

27. Decree of December 27, 1932.

28. *Malaia Sovetskaia Enciklopediia,* article: "Pasport."

29. Decree of November 12, 1931.

30. Decrees of September 24 and October 9, 1930.

31. Law of June 27, 1936 (*Izvestia,* June 28, 1936).

32. Decree of March 21, 1937.

33. *Izvestia,* January 31, 1932.

34. Decree of April 7, 1935.

35. Decrees of January 25, 1931 and August 7, 1932.

36. Bukharin, Rykov, Sokolnikov.

37. Trotsky, Rakovsky, Muralov, Piatakov, Smirnov.

38. Karl Marx, *Selected Works,* vol. I, pp. 356-7. 2 vols. ed. by C. P. Dutt. New York, International Publishers, 1936.

39. Friedrich Engels, preface of March 6, 1885, in Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850.* New York, New York Labor News Company, 1924.

CHAPTER III

1. *Meditsinskii Rabotnik* (The Medical Worker), Moscow, February 8, 1951.

2. Aristotle, in *The Constitution of Athens,* and Herodotus both relate the incident.

3. Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques,* Book IV. Paris, Garnier, 1932.

4. Winston Churchill, *Marlborough, His Life and Times,* vol. II, p. 999. 4 vols. London, Harrap, 1933–1938.

5. Bernard Simiot, *De quoi vivait Bonaparte,* pp. 91, 95-98. Paris, Deux Rives, 1952.

6. Kohn-Bramstedt, *Aristocracy and the Middle Classes in Germany, 1830–1900.* London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.

7. Stenographic report of a statement made at Longeau (Somme) before an audience of more than a thousand by Louis Prat, a French Communist deputy at the time expelled from the party. (Supplement to *Le Populaire Dimanche,* June 9, 1951.)

8. Valentin Gonzales and Julian Gorkin, *La vie et la mort en U.R.S.S., 1939–1949,* p. 173. Paris, Plon, 1950.

9. *Pravda,* December 13, 1950.

10. Statements of Attorney General Grigori Nikolaievich Safonov in March, 1948.

11. *Meditsinskii Rabotnik,* October 12, 1950, and February 4 and 22, 1951. See also *Szabad Nep,* February 26, 1951.

12. Suzanne Labin, *Stalin's Russia,* pp. 257-8. London, Gollancz, 1950.

13. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Vol. IV, p. 449. 15 vols. New York, Macmillan, 1930–35.

14. A Chinese diplomat who held a high ministerial post under Chiang

Kai-shek assures me that the salary of a Chinese official is literally not enough to live on.

15. Quoted by Ernest Gruening, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Vol. XII, p. 699.

16. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws,* Book IV, Chapter 19. 2 vols. London, G. Bell, 1878.

17. W. G. Krivitsky, *In Stalin's Secret Service,* p. 116. New York, Harper, 1939. The most nearly perfect counterfeiting of dollars was done by Stalin.

18. Interests whose mechanism and role have been admirably analyzed by Bertrand Russell in his *Power, a New Social Analysis.* New York, W. W. Norton, 1938.

19. Bramstedt, *op. cit.,* p. 26.

20. Hermann Rauschning, *Makers of Destruction: Meetings and Talks in Revolutionary Germany.* London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1942. Hanns Johst, *Ruf des Reiches—Echo des Volks!* pp. 52-54. Munich, F. Eher, 1940.

21. Boris Souvarine, *Stalin, a Critical Survey of Bolshevism.* Chapter X. New York, Longmans, Green, 1939.

22. The Soviet press is continually complaining of cases of swindling, waste of public funds, and robbery. See Labin, *op. cit.* the chapter: "Morals, Manners, and Customs."

23. Krivitsky, *op. cit.,* chief of the G.P.U. in western Europe, gives many proofs of this.

CHAPTER IV

1. Paul Gautier, *Madame de Stael et Napoléon,* p. 185. Paris, 1903.

2. *Bulletin de l'association d'études et d'informations politiques internationales.* Paris, May 1, 1950.

3. Valentin Gonzales and Julian Gorkin, *El Campesino: Life and Death in Soviet Russia,* p. 83. New York, Putnam, 1952.

4. In a speech in the Chamber of Deputies, quoted by A. Laponneraye, *Histoire de la révolution française depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1845,* Vol. III, p. 77. 3 vols. Paris, F. Cajani, 1844–46.

CHAPTER V

1. Walter Hamel, *Deutsches Verwaltungsrecht,* pp. 348-386. Munich, 1937.

2. Giovanni Gentile, *Che cosa è il fascismo?,* p. 98. Florence, Vallecchi, 1925.

CHAPTER VI

1. Anatole France, *At the Sign of the Reine Pedauque,* p. 145. London and New York, John Lane, 1912.

2. Benito Mussolini, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions,* p. 10. Rome, Ardita, 1935. This first appeared in the article "Fascism" in the *Enciclopedia Italiana,* Vol. XIV.

3. Diderot's phrase in *Jacques le Fataliste.*

4. M. Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, "Les jours de notre vie," in *Les Temps Modernes,* pp. 1153-68. 1950.

5. M. Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, *art. cit.,* p. 1168.

CHAPTER VIII

1. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography,* p. 74. New York, Columbia University Press, 1924.

2. Plato, *The State and the Republic.*

3. The reader has probably recognized Aragon, Picasso, and Joliot-Curie.

4. Bertrand Russell, *Power, a New Social Analysis,* pp. 260-61. New York, W. W. Norton, 1938.

CHAPTER IX

1. James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution.* New York, John Day, 1941.

2. Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction,* p. 157. London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1940.

3. Among these circumstances that have managed to become profound causes, I point out the following to commentators more competent than I: the countries in Europe that have furnished a pathogenic field for totalitarianism are those the French Revolution upset, either directly or in Napoleon's campaigns. And Napoleon constitutes the prototype of the modern totalitarian in that he combined a military and disciplinary order with the subversive attitude, for, even under the emperor's attire, he continued to embody, in the eyes of the ci-devants, the regicide revolution.

(Photograph by United Press Photos)

SUZANNE LABIN

SUZANNE LABIN is one of France's most prominent political writers. A graduate of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Internationales of Paris and a Master of Science of the University of Paris, she has acquired international reputation with her magazine and newspaper articles. And her authoritative book, STALIN'S RUSSIA, which is available in a variety of translations throughout the world, was described by *The New York Herald Tribune* as "a passionate book, but is it also a book of profound and terrible objectivity."

Mme Labin is the wife of Edouard Labin, director of the laboratory of scientific research of Radio Industrie in Paris.

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By Arthur H. Lewis

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